

## **Pollution cops set carpool example**

### **Air district employees hope to accelerate interest**

By Alex Breitler

Stockton Record, Sunday, Sept. 6, 2009

Air pollution cops have for years tried persuading the public to carpool.

They've had no problem persuading themselves.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's Modesto office, which employs about 40 people, including some from Stockton, has saved 371,480 miles through its carpool program since 1992, officials said recently.

Unlike most businesses, the district tracks the number of miles saved by its own employees and calculates the reduced emissions as a result.

Over a recent four-month period, for example, the district saved 23,110 miles and prevented the release of 23,950 pounds of carbon dioxide, a key greenhouse gas.

That's roughly equal to the average annual carbon emissions from one California home.

It's not enough to put a sizable dent in climate change, of course, but if everyone did it?

Carpooling makes a 52-mile round-trip commute for air quality assistant Dottie Shoffner a little easier. She and one or two other San Joaquin County residents normally hook up in the morning for the drive in to work.

"I enjoy it," she said. "You have someone you can talk to, and it makes the time go faster when there's someone else in the car."

Most Americans are still commuting solo. About 10.4 percent carpooled to work in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Trying to accelerate interest, the air district keeps a spreadsheet that matches employees with potential carpool partners, and offers a stipend to those who carpool at least 60 percent of the time, said spokesman Anthony Presto.

It also encourages no driving while at work. Bicycles are kept at the office for those who have to run an errand; barbecue lunches are held on Fridays to encourage people not to drive to a store or restaurant.

"We want to be a good example," Presto said.

The majority of the 40 employees from all over the north Valley are now either carpooling, riding a bike or walking to work, he said.

One of them is John Cadrett, a compliance manager who lives in Turlock. His carpool group has had as many as six participants, he said.

"I was going six weeks between having to gas up my car," Cadrett said.

"I think staff realized here that it's our chance to make a personal contribution to reduce air pollution."

### **Savings at a glance**

Valley Air District officials said their commute program over a four-month period has provided the following results:

- Miles saved: 23,110
- Gallons of gas saved: 1,242
- Savings on gas: \$3,814
- Savings on maintenance and tires: \$65.73
- Reduced emissions of carbon dioxide: 23,950 (roughly the amount of carbon emitted by a typical California household for one year)

## Massive Tejon project headed to first vote

BY JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, Sept. 5, 2009

The land flows upward from the lake in waves to the horizon, covered in grass dried golden by the summer sun and a lacework of oaks.

Vistas on the working cattle ranch are serene. The air is quiet.

But this corner of massive, privately owned Tejon Ranch along Interstate 5 near Lebec is nonetheless the site of a raging public battle over commercial and residential development.

On Thursday that battle will advance to the Kern County Planning Commission as the Tejon Mountain Village plan faces its first public hearing by a government body.

Kern County Planning Department officials are recommending approval of the project. The Planning Commission will, in turn, make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, which has the final say.

### THE VISION

Tejon Ranch and its partner, builder DMB Associates, want to create an exclusive, private mountain resort community in the hills east of Lebec.

The Tejon Mountain Village vision would be filled out by two golf courses, 3,450 homes, a 160,000-square-foot public shopping center near I-5 and a maximum of 750 hotel rooms.

Houses and apartments would be grouped in small enclaves around the lake and on the level tops of surrounding ridges.

Larger lot custom homes would rise from the more remote hilltops in the northwest and northeast sections of the development area.

Buildings would be designed to fit into the existing land rather than the land being molded to fit the buildings.

But not everyone thinks as highly of the project as Tejon and DMB do.

### PREPARING A DEFENSE

Tejon has spent years preparing for the inevitable opposition to its plan -- addressing the area's importance to the endangered California Condor, the delicate balance of water resources in the area's upland valleys, the threat of fire, the proximity of the San Andreas Fault and the sense from the nearby Frazier Mountain communities that they have a personal stake in what happens on the ranch.

Tejon went so far as to craft a careful deal with major environmental groups, including the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club, which prevents urban development on the vast majority of the sprawling Tejon Ranch in exchange for those groups' support for building on the remaining sections of ranch land.

"We believe this project has been thoroughly reviewed," said Lorelei Oviatt, special projects chief in the Kern County Planning Department. "They subjected their own plans to the variety of the scientific and environmental review. I think it shows they are open to the public impact and the scientific input."

But not all the project's environmental impacts can be completely eliminated.

### IMPACT AND OPPOSITION

Tejon Mountain Village will induce growth, impact the condor, create glare, [worsen air quality](#) and increase traffic, according to the environmental analysis of the project overseen by the Planning Department.

Planners have received 2,217 written comments about the project.

County Planning Director Ted James said the vast majority of those comments -- some 2,086 -- were submitted through an electronic form petition titled "Send Tejon Mountain Village back to the Drawing Board."

Jan de Leeuw -- a UCLA professor who lives in the area -- said his three most critical concerns are tied to the condor, water and traffic on I-5.

He acknowledges Tejon Mountain Village has committed to take all the project's water from the California Aqueduct.

But he is skeptical that the supply in an ever-drier California will be there when the development needs it.

He believes project drivers will clog I-5 and that the developers hope to use permits from wildlife regulators to chase condors out of the building area.

"It's clear that it's a less offensive project than (nearby proposed development) Frazier Park Estates," de Leeuw said. But "these impacts on the freeway, on the condor, on the aquifer need to be addressed seriously."

Lloyd Wiens of the Grapevine Resource Group can see the benefits of more jobs and shopping for the surrounding community.

But like de Leeuw, he worries that water supplies will fail Tejon Mountain Village and it will be forced to pump from the surrounding aquifer the mountain communities share.

Area resident Mary Griffin worries the project sits in fire-prone areas and saving the homes there in a wildland fire could cost taxpayers millions.

#### COMMUNITY TRUST

Laer Pearce, spokesman for Tejon Mountain Village, said it understands the concerns.

But project leaders feel they have ambitiously pursued every option to address those fears and prevent the worst-case impacts.

Tejon Ranch spokesman Barry Zoeller said Village partners feel a strong sense of stewardship of the land and have gone a long way to ensure their plan will do as little environmental damage as possible.

Committing to build a quality project and handle environmental impacts is just good business, he said.

But for neighbors it is a trust issue.

"The surrounding community doesn't think that their main purpose is to be good stewards of the environment. Their main purpose is to sell a lot of homes and get out of here," de Leeuw said. "But that's just my opinion. I could be too cynical."

### **Valley air is cleaner, but temperatures to rise**

By Valerie Gibbons

Visalia Times Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2009

A weak system from the Pacific Northwest brought temperatures in the mid-80s and clean air to the Valley this weekend.

The high temperature on Sunday hovered around 84 degrees, while Monday's high posted at 89 degrees.

That push of marine air helped to clear out the smoke and smog that have dominated the skyline over the last week, bringing the air quality rating up to "good" on Labor Day with an index of 39, a 100-point improvement over this time last week, according to the San Joaquin Valley air district.

But Scott Borgioli, a meteorologist with WeatherAg.com, warns not to get too comfortable with the seasonal temperatures.

Triple digits might be on tap by this Friday.

The warming trend will start today.

"According to the computer models, by next weekend, thunderstorms will return to the mountains, and the Valley could see some passing clouds from time to time," Borgioli said.

Friday and Saturday will be the warmest days of the week.

"We will be monitoring a low pressure system off the Central Coast that is expected to develop by week's end to see if it allows any moisture to be brought our way, as the computer models are bouncing back and forth on this," he said.

Today's high will be in the mid-90s, while Wednesday through Friday will have highs in the upper 90s. Next weekend is expected to be mostly sunny and hot with a few passing clouds at times. Highs will be around 100 degrees, while mountain thunderstorms may return. The average high and low temperatures for Visalia this week are 88 and 60.

## **Around East County: School district employee has students riding in style**

By Trine Gallegos

Contra Costa Times, Sunday, Sept. 6, 2009

Karl Steinberg feels more than a million bucks richer.

Only, he doesn't really have a million dollars; the million-plus is in the form of grants he's won to pay for new school buses, and the Antioch resident couldn't be happier.

Steinberg is the supervisor of vehicle and equipment maintenance for the Antioch Unified School District. In 2003, he first applied for, and won, a grant with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District for lower-emission school buses to replace district buses that were more than 20 years old.

Ironically, the old bus that had to be traded for the new one was the very one that Steinberg rode as a student at the then-Antioch Junior High. He went on to graduate from Antioch High in 1986.

A seven-year AUSD employee, Steinberg applied again in 2004, and AUSD was awarded two more buses. On a winning streak, he went for the trifecta in 2008 and scored eight new buses, bringing his grant wins to 11 buses.

"We were surprised we received all eight but needless to say, very happy and very pleased," Steinberg said. "Throughout the whole process (with the air quality district), I've been very happy. I'm very glad it's worked out well for us."

The grants' main focus is cleaner emissions, to trade in higher-polluting buses for energy-efficient ones. "With that comes newer technology, too," Steinberg said of the buses now equipped with seat belts, ABS brakes and more.

The school district's Sharon Houdashelt said: "This was not part of his job duties, but he took the initiative to apply for a grant that would benefit district students. We believe that Karl's continual follow-up was instrumental in being awarded the maximum number of buses "... (all) thanks to the effort of this dedicated employee."

The total cost of the eight buses awarded with the 2008 grant was \$992,718.28, said Houdashelt, the district's operations manager for business services.

In his understated fashion, Steinberg said: "It worked out very well with us, especially in this funding environment."

Yes, very well indeed.

## **State fees on greenhouse gas output could be near**

By Michael Gardner, U-T Sacramento Bureau

San Diego Union-Tribune, Sunday, Sept. 6, 2009

SACRAMENTO — State air-quality regulators appear back on track to impose the nation's first broad-based fee on greenhouse gas emissions, potentially costing Californians a little extra to fill their gas tanks, turn up the heat or go out to dinner.

Regulators estimate that overall, the average consumer will pay less than \$1.50 a year more once the fee is passed down by energy providers and others that release greenhouse gasses linked to global warming.

"We are all aware that California's present economic environment is less than favorable and this is a difficult time to propose a fee," said Jeannie Blakeslee, a state regulator who helped craft the plan.

"Yet we do not want to lose sight of our long-term goals. Staff has gone to great lengths to ensure that this fee will be reasonable and will not be overly burdensome on anyone."

The fee will affect about 250 types of businesses, such as the energy and cement industries, that burn huge quantities of fossil fuels. Together, those account for 85 percent of California's emissions of carbon dioxide — the predominant greenhouse gas.

The fee is expected to initially raise about \$50 million a year, starting in mid-2010. At first, industry would pay 12 cents for every ton of carbon dioxide released.

Annualized costs spread out among consumers and businesses seem small: 62 cents on utility bills and perhaps 65 cents at the gas pump for economy cars. A supermarket would pay \$95, a family restaurant \$14 and a 100-person office \$7, according to state estimates.

But at 12 cents for every ton released, an oil refinery would pay about \$1.3 million a year, and the average cement plant about \$200,000.

“Every additional cost adds burden to our already very high cost of doing business in the state,” said Dorothy Rothrock, representing the California Manufacturers and Technology Association.

The Air Resources Board proposed the fee to cover the administrative expenses of implementing its aggressive strategy to curb global warming, regulating a broad swath of society from big-rigs to landfills to air conditioners. There are about 175 employees working on climate change issues associated with the board's campaign.

The program has also been living on borrowed money for some time. Exercising authority granted by the Legislature, the board has tapped agriculture, recycling and energy agency accounts to tide it over until a permanent revenue stream can be adopted. Part of the fee — about \$13.5 million — will be set aside annually until the money is repaid over the next three years.

Once the loans are repaid, the board plans to lower the fee to 9 cents per ton of greenhouse gases emitted, probably in 2014.

“The fee will eventually be paid by the consumer no matter who pays (upfront),” said Jon Costantino, manager of climate change programs for the air board.

For example, a chain restaurant can expect higher natural gas and electricity costs of about \$14 a year, he said.

A wary Susie Berlin, an attorney representing the Northern California Power Agency, urged the board to cap the levy.

“There are no cost-containment measures,” she said. “Because the fee amount is uncapped and the proposed regulation has no termination provisions, the total obligation to affected entities can and likely will increase from year to year.”

Regulators agree limits are not included. However, they say, any increase would have to be approved by the Legislature and governor as part of the state budget.

Kristen Grenfell, a lawyer with the Natural Resources Defense Council, urged the board to stay on track.

“This fee is a small price to pay for confronting global warming and transforming our energy economy,” she said.

The Air Resources Board seemed prepared to implement the fees three months ago, but was interrupted when electricity providers promised legal challenges. The original plan could have levied fees on power transmitted through the state but not used here — a possible violation of federal energy law.

Air board Chairwoman Mary Nichols urged a rewrite, noting that “this is one of those areas where we're blazing a trail. . . . We want to get it right.” However, Nichols was adamant that a legally defensible fee be imposed on imported electricity because much of it is generated using coal — a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions.

The board's staff has subsequently reworked the plan, which is to be presented to the full board Sept. 24.

Under the new proposal, the fee on power providers will be assessed at the point of first delivery, when electricity is placed on the grid for delivery within California.

Most utilities were still assessing the latest collection plan and hadn't submitted public comments, but Southern California Edison has signaled its support.

## **U.S., Canada near agreement to control pollutants from ships**

By Renee Schoof - McClatchy Newspapers  
Modesto Bee, Monday, Sept. 7, 2009

WASHINGTON -- The five-story-tall engines on oceangoing vessels burn some of the dirtiest oil - bottom-of-the-barrel bunker - and churn out a substantial amount of the air pollution in American port cities, coastal communities along shipping lanes and places hundreds of miles inland.

Now the United States and Canada are nearing an international agreement to clean up the emissions of ships traveling within 200 nautical miles of shore. Scientists at the Environmental Protection Agency calculate that pollution controls will save the lives of 8,300 people each year and help more than 3 million avoid respiratory problems.

The biggest health benefits will be in deep-sea ports, but the EPA calculates that communities far inland also will benefit from cleaner air. The air in the Grand Canyon will be clearer. Acid rain will decrease.

The International Maritime Organization, the United Nations body that deals with marine pollution, is expected to approve an emission control area for most of the United States and Canada at its next meeting in March. The organization agreed in July that the plan met its guidelines.

"I think we're headed in a very positive direction," said John Kaltenstein, who oversees the marine program for the environmental group Friends of the Earth in California.

If the International Maritime Organization adopts the emission control area, ships traveling in a vast region will have to use fuel with a lower sulfur content beginning in 2012, and the sulfur content would be reduced further in 2015. Beginning in 2016, new engines on vessels operating in the area also would have to use equipment that would reduce nitrogen oxide emissions by 80 percent.

The EPA plans to finalize a rule in December that would ban the sale of high-sulfur fuel in U.S. coastal and internal waters and would require the nitrogen oxide controls on new engines in U.S. ships, in line with the international proposal for a North American emission control area.

The engines of big ships emit large amounts of nitrogen oxides and sulfur oxides, which contribute to ground-level ozone, acid rain and particulate matter.

U.S. scientists say that air pollution from these substances causes premature deaths, worsens asthma and is associated with other respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Ozone can irritate the respiratory system and limit lung function. Exposure to ozone is especially risky for children, elderly people and those with respiratory disorders such as asthma.

The EPA also classifies diesel exhaust from the engines as a likely carcinogen in humans.

Air quality advocates cheer the health benefits from tougher ship-emissions rules, but say that there's more to be done:

- The nitrogen oxide emissions reductions will apply only to new engines after 2016. The EPA is considering a voluntary program for existing vessels, but environmentalists question whether it would deliver results.

- The engine controls to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions and the strictest clean-fuel requirements apply only to the emission control area proposed by the United States and Canada. It doesn't include Alaska's Aleutian Islands and the Arctic. It also excludes Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

- Carbon dioxide and black carbon (soot), two of the main contributors to global warming, are left unregulated. Black carbon is a particular concern in the Arctic, because it settles on snow and ice, reducing their reflective quality and increasing warming.

The International Maritime Organization hasn't adopted any mandatory controls on greenhouse gas emissions at sea.

Byron Bunker, the EPA official who's responsible for regulations for heavy-duty engines, said that the biggest immediate reduction in pollution from the International Maritime Organization's expected action in March would be from the change in the sulfur content in fuel.

Ships probably will have to stop using residual fuel - the byproduct of refining crude oil - and start using distillate fuel, which burns more cleanly, Bunker said. Black carbon and other forms of particulate also would be reduced, he said.

Ships today account for about 17 percent of the air pollution from mobile sources in the United States, Bunker said. If oceangoing vessels weren't regulated and shipping increased as expected, they'd represent about half the mobile-source pollution by 2030.

The fuel changes start in 2012, and fuel would have to have still lower sulfur content in 2015, reducing sulfur oxides and particulate matter emissions by more than 85 percent.

"The health and welfare benefits we estimate are breathtaking," Bunker said.

The EPA is studying whether to include the rest of Alaska and the Canadian Arctic in the emission control area. "Essentially, we don't have all our science done to make the compelling case," Bunker said.

The Alaska Wilderness League and other environmental groups asked the EPA to include Arctic Alaska for the sake of health and the environment. Ozone and black carbon are short-lived, but they warm the region where they're emitted. Reducing them would have immediate benefits, the group wrote in a letter to the EPA last spring. A recent report on Arctic marine shipping by the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental group, said that black carbon and nitrogen oxide could have regional effects on climate even in small amounts.

In the Arctic, "a large increase in shipping is projected, and we're just starting to see it," said Scott Highleyman, the international director of the Pew Charitable Trusts' Arctic program. Much will be regional transportation for oil, gas and mining, but in the future new international shipping lanes are expected to open in the summer as a result of global warming.

"The people living in the Arctic in Canada and Alaska deserve the same protection from air pollution as the rest of us, especially given the dramatic increase in shipping traffic that will result from the melting ice pack," Highleyman said.

The EPA proposed the emission control area instead of applying U.S. regulation to foreign ships, which make up about 90 percent of the total.

California decided not to wait for federal and international action and passed its own law that applies to U.S. and foreign vessels. Since July 1, all oceangoing vessels within 24 miles of the state's coast must use cleaner fuel.

Organizations that represent the shipping industry support the international cleanup plan for zones such as the one the U.S. and Canada want to put in place and others in the Baltic Sea and North Sea, even though they'll pay more for fuel.

The EPA says the costs will be small compared with the health benefits. It estimates that the cost will amount to about a penny more for a pair of shoes. The shipping industry, on the other hand, says that fuel costs are hard to predict but could double.

"We've been saying for ages and ages that if you need to regulate shipping, because it's an international kind of industry, it needs to be done at the international level," said Kathy Metcalf of the Chamber of Shipping of America, a trade association that represents U.S. shipping companies.

The EPA may have underestimated the higher cost of clean fuel, but the shipping organization isn't challenging its scientific analysis, Metcalf said. "When it's put in terms of tens of thousands of lives and illness and disease, that's not something we're going to argue with."

Brian Wood-Thomas, who helped the EPA devise its marine emissions plan in the 1990s and negotiated the emissions agreements, left the agency last year to become the vice president for environmental policy at the World Shipping Council.

He said the council generally supported the international standards. Weaker standards wouldn't hold up, because some countries would be dissatisfied and impose stronger ones of their own, he said. "That leads to exactly the type of thing everybody in the industry sees as a nightmare."

## **New Japan leaders vow 25 percent cut in emissions**

By Jay Alabaster- Associated Press Writer

In the San Francisco Chronicle and Merced Sun-Star, Monday, Sept. 7, 2009

TOKYO -- Japan's incoming prime minister promised Monday to aim for a 25 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 - among the most ambitious cuts proposed by an economic power and significantly more aggressive than the current plan.

The reduction, which will be measured from 1990 levels, was immediately hailed by environmentalists, who are watching target proposals closely ahead of a major international climate conference in December. Prime Minister Taro Aso's current plan was to cut emissions by about 8 percent.

"Japan's change in government will bring a major shift to our climate change policies, through international negotiations for the future of human society, and I want to begin in a way that is said to have made a major contribution," said Yukio Hatoyama, who is widely expected to be named prime minister next week when parliament meets to choose Aso's successor.

Hatoyama leads the Democratic Party of Japan, which won last month's elections in a landslide, pushing Aso's party from power for only the second time in more than 50 years. Hatoyama said Japan would adopt the 25-percent goal, which was one of the Democrats' campaign pledges, in a speech at an environmental forum in Tokyo.

The pledge comes ahead of a United Nations conference in the Danish capital of Copenhagen, where world leaders hope to forge a new agreement to replace the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, set to expire in 2012.

In the run-up to the conference, proposed levels of greenhouse gas reductions have been a major point of contention, pitting environmentalists who say drastic cuts are needed against business leaders who are wary of increased costs.

Greenpeace International Climate Policy Director Martin Kaiser called the Japanese pledge a "major step forward," but it still fell short of the 40 percent reduction the group says is needed from industrialized countries.

"This is a clear-cut signal to major world leaders, especially President Obama," Kaiser said in a telephone interview.

A U.S. Congress bill approved by the House of Representatives would cut emissions by 17 percent from 2005 levels by 2020. It would mark a rare piece of climate change legislation in the U.S., but the plan still falls short of many other industrial countries' proposals, which use 1990 as a benchmark from which to cut emissions. According to EU data, U.S. output of greenhouse gases rose 15 percent from 1990 to 2005.

The bill, which must still be approved by the Senate, is strongly opposed by some lawmakers, who have said it will raise energy costs and destroy jobs.

Japanese business leaders are also wary of significant reduction targets that they say could hurt their country's competitiveness. A report released last month by the Keidanren, a powerful business lobby, stated that "emission cut targets should be balanced internationally."

The 27-nation European Union has already agreed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 20 percent from 1990 levels by 2020 - a number that could be increased to 30 percent if other countries sign on.

Tokyo's previous goal, released in June by Aso's government, matched pledges from other countries but was widely criticized as inadequate by environmentalists.

Many are eager to see Japan once again take the lead in environmental issues. The country hosted the Kyoto conference in 1997 and is home to producers of some of the world's leading environmental technologies, including advanced solar panels and top-selling hybrid cars like the Toyota Prius.

"For a long time, everybody has been waiting for everybody else to move in the negotiations. Now, Japan has taken a bold step forward and set an ambitious target. I hope this will inspire other countries to follow suit," said Connie Hedgaard, Denmark's climate minister, who will host the Copenhagen summit.

One of the issues the Copenhagen conference will have to tackle is how - or even whether - rich and poor countries will share the burden of reducing emissions. The Kyoto treaty set mandatory caps on emissions for 37 wealthy countries but made no demands on other nations.

Developing countries point out that industrialized ones are most responsible for past emissions and thus should shoulder most of the cuts. They also argue they are less able to weather restrictions on their growth and have asked for financial assistance in cutting their greenhouse gases. Wealthy countries, however, note that many developing nations now contribute significantly to emissions levels.

Hatoyama said the new Japanese government was considering whether to propose that richer countries provide financial and technical assistance in environmental areas to developing ones.

He said if he is elected prime minister next week, a near certainty, he will attend a Sept. 22 gathering of world leaders to discuss climate change at United Nations headquarters in New York.

## **Japan's Next Premier Vows to Cut Emissions Sharply**

By Hiroko Tabuchi, staff writer  
N.Y. Times, Monday, Sept. 7, 2009

TOKYO – Japan's presumptive prime minister breathed new life on Monday into efforts to curb global warming, standing by a campaign pledge to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent in the next 10 years from 1990 levels — a target that environmentalists said puts Japan at the forefront of the fight against climate change.

Nonetheless, the incoming prime minister, Yukio Hatoyama, whose center-left Democrats swept to a landmark electoral victory last month, attached what appeared to be a new caveat to his pledge, saying it was contingent on similarly ambitious goals by other major polluters.

That could become a major obstacle because of a deadlock between industrialized and emerging economies over who should bear the most responsibility for emission cuts.

"Climate change is already upon us, and its effects are amplifying," Mr. Hatoyama said at an environment conference in Tokyo. "Of course, Japan's reduction targets alone cannot stop climate change. We will seek to build an international framework that involves all major countries and is fair and realistic."

He also said, "The condition for Japan's promise to international society is that all major countries agree to ambitious targets."

Japan has been under pressure to set tougher climate policies after its emissions hit a record in 2008, putting the country 16 percent above targets set 12 years ago in the global-warming treaty known as the Kyoto Protocol. Even with Mr. Hatoyama's caveat, environmentalists lauded Japan's new reductions target as going significantly further than the goals set by the departing government of Taro Aso, which had been roundly criticized. They also said Japan could help build momentum ahead of a summit meeting on climate change in Copenhagen this year.

The European Union has promised to cut emissions to 20 percent below 1990 levels, and by 30 percent if other wealthy nations follow suit. In the United States, Congress is debating a bill that would reduce emissions to 6 percent below 1990 levels.

Martin Kaiser, climate policy director at Greenpeace International, said Japan's target under the new government was "the first sign of climate leadership we have seen out of any developed country for quite some time."

Yvo de Boer, executive secretary for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, also praised Japan, saying its emissions target "is commensurate with what science says is needed and will catalyze real change in the Japanese economy."

Still, Mr. Hatoyama's pledge is expected to face stiff opposition from industrial lobbies, which argue that Japanese industry is already highly energy efficient, and that committing to such steep emissions cuts will hurt an economy struggling through its worst recession in decades.

A government report issued earlier this year showed that pursuing a 25 percent cut from 1990 levels could hurt important manufacturing industries, threatening almost 90 million jobs and weighing on household incomes.

Keidanren, Japan's largest business federation, has said it opposes any cut bigger than 6 percent from 1990 levels.

Others call Mr. Hatoyama's targets naïve and a threat to Japan's competitiveness.

"I don't think Mr. Hatoyama realizes what he is committing Japan to," said Tsutomu Toichi, managing director at the Institute of Energy Economics, a Tokyo-based research group. "He has to realize that this is not a campaign slogan. It's an international pledge to which Japan will be held accountable."

Some critics have pointed to other policies in the Democrats' campaign platform that seem to contradict their commitment to reducing greenhouse emissions. The party swept to power on a promise of wide-ranging measures to lift Japan out of recession.

To help households, for example, the Democrats have proposed ending highway tolls and a gas surcharge. Environmentalists say such moves could lead to a shift away from public transportation and increase pollution.

It is also not clear how much of the emissions cuts will come from real reductions in Japan, rather than so-called carbon offsets, which allow governments to pay others to make their carbon reductions for them.

"We'll have to monitor how the Democrats balance various policies going forward," said Masako Konishi, climate policy adviser to the conservation group W.W.F. Japan. "But Mr. Hatoyama's ambitions go far beyond anything we've seen in Japan."

Experts say Japan's new climate change agenda should press other countries to prepare similarly ambitious targets before the meeting in Copenhagen. Almost 200 countries are expected to attend Dec. 6 to 18 to set worldwide goals for reducing carbon dioxide and other pollutants.

There is concern, however, that the Obama administration, embroiled in a debate over health care, will not have time to win Congress's support on emissions reductions before the conference.

Deciding how much wealthy countries like the United States and Japan should cut emissions — and how much that burden should be borne by emerging economies like China and India, which are big polluters — will be a major issue in Copenhagen.

Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a global scientific body, said the new Japanese government could play a leading role in those talks.

"With leaders like Mr. Hatoyama attending," Mr. Pachauri said, "there is every reason to believe that we will get a strong agreement in Copenhagen."

## **Fisherow: Working for the Environment -- in the Justice Department**

From the Partnership for Public Service

In the Washington Post, Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2009

A seasoned litigator and environmental warrior, Walter Benjamin Fisherow has brought polluters to the settlement table and helped make our air safer to breathe.

Since joining the Department of Justice (DOJ) in 1987, Fisherow has overseen dozens of government lawyers whose work has helped eliminate two million tons of toxic pollutants generated by coal-fired power plants annually. His role in enforcing the Clean Air Act has resulted in some of the largest environmental settlements ever.

"These settlements take such a large amount of that bad stuff out of the air that you go to sleep at night truly believing that your job matters. You have an impact on people's lives," Fisherow said. "That is very satisfying. To go to bed thinking, 'wow, I have impacted 300 million people.'"

It was in 1999 that Fisherow first assembled a team of DOJ attorneys that launched a series of actions against utility companies whose coal-fired power plants emitted massive quantities of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides into the air. The emissions were of concern, as they can cause asthma and other health

effects, particularly in children and the elderly, and contribute to acid rain and smog that pollute skies and damage forests.

His leadership has resulted in 16 settlements with electric utilities, the installation of more than \$11 billion worth of air pollution control equipment and a drastic reduction in harmful air pollutants each year, an ongoing effort.

Fisherow's particularly hailed for leading a government team that achieved the 2007 settlement with American Electric Power (AEP). The utility company agreed to invest \$4.6 billion on cleaner coal-burning technologies, pay a record \$15 million fine and spend \$60 million to mitigate damage to the environment. The result was the elimination of 813,000 tons of air pollutants each year.

The AEP case remains the largest civil environmental enforcement case ever brought by the federal government, involving dozens of government lawyers, 50,000 lawyer-hours and millions of documents.

Fisherow's colleagues describe him as a motivational force at the helm of a concerted effort to protect the environment, but also as a commander who wields the awesome power of federal legal forces fairly and inspires his troops with good humor and charm.

"They are against the top law firms in the nation and Ben is like the general in the war room. He's motivating people, helping them along and inspiring them," Justin Smith, an assistant section chief in DOJ's Environment and Natural Resources Division, said.

At the same time, Fisherow's leadership style is hardly authoritarian. "He's the one that will make a little comment on the side in a stressful situation that will give you a belly laugh," Smith said.

His success is also notable because he took on an industry that has historically had strong ties to government. Fisherow used his negotiation skills to convince both the administration and polluters to accept cleaner coal-burning alternatives.

"He did it repeatedly. He personally led the settlement negotiations for most of the cases. When you are handling a negotiation, you not only represent the government at your best, but you have to be willing to listen to the people on the other side of the table and to find common meeting ground that can be the basis of a settlement that avoids further litigation," Catherine McCabe, acting assistant administrator for the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance at the Environmental Protection Agency, said.

"They don't come better than Ben. He has a presence. He commands respect," Bruce Gelber, chief of the DOJ's Environmental Enforcement Section, said.

It's not just Ben Fisherow's presence that commands respect. It's his track record as an enforcer of federal environmental laws, which is unsurpassed across government.

## **U.S. climate change bill to compete with healthcare**

By Richard Cowan

In the Washington Post, Monday, Sept. 7, 2009

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Environmentalists hope the push in Congress for climate change legislation is not overwhelmed by the debate dominating Capitol Hill over changing the U.S. healthcare system. But it might be.

Already two months behind schedule and unsure whether enough Democrats will play along, Senate leaders still aim to pass a bill by December when a United Nations summit convenes in Copenhagen to set worldwide goals for reducing carbon dioxide and other pollutants.

But as the debate over healthcare legislation rages and with President Barack Obama due to address a joint session of Congress on Wednesday to try to rescue the faltering plan, it was unclear whether rattled lawmakers will have the time -- or the inclination -- to take on climate change.

"It's not an impossibility, but it's certainly not a slam-dunk and never has been," said Frank O'Donnell, president of the activist group Clean Air Watch.

The healthcare debate, O'Donnell added, "has basically sucked all the oxygen out of the room."

With many moderate Democrats facing a tough vote on healthcare, O'Donnell wondered whether they also would be willing to do so on an environmental bill that could increase consumers' energy costs. "How many salvos in one year can they take?" O'Donnell asked.

Staffers at the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee have been working behind the scenes on language intended to reel in enough of those moderates.

Senator Barbara Boxer, who heads the committee, has been working off of a bill passed by the House of Representatives intended to cut utility and factory emissions of greenhouse gases by 17 percent by 2020, from 2005 levels. It could be late September or beyond before Boxer is ready to unveil her bill.

Beyond healthcare, the climate bill might have to compete for time with some other major debates, such as new financial industry controls, annual spending bills, U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan and some must-do tax measures.

## AVERTING THE "ABYSS"

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Thursday said the world was "heading toward an abyss" without swift action to reduce carbon emissions. Without it, he told a 155-nation climate conference in Geneva, melting polar ice and rising sea levels will threaten cities from Tokyo to New Orleans.

Environmentalists hope that such high-profile attention will help jolt Congress toward action.

While public support for healthcare legislation has eroded in recent weeks, environmentalists are heartened by polls indicating that voters want Congress to fix global warming by expanding alternative energy sources such as biofuels and solar and wind power.

"Support for energy and climate legislation held firm and ticked up a bit" lately, said Joseph Mendelson, the National Wildlife Federation's director of global warming policy.

But if the legislation sputters in the Senate, that would not halt Obama's drive to reduce carbon dioxide pollution.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is considering regulations that would force large polluters -- those spewing at least 25,000 tons annually -- to reduce their emissions.

"EPA can do some important things to start to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions in our country," EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said.

Interviewed on Thursday on National Public Radio, Jackson noted that her agency has authority under the existing Clean Air Act, but like Obama, she prefers Congress pass comprehensive legislation.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Sunday, Sept. 6, 2009:](#)

## **Everyone should pay**

### **When will gas prices reach \$4 a gallon?**

A recent spurt in gasoline prices has experts saying \$4 a gallon may not be far off -- bad news for anyone who drives.

Some Valley residents vow to drive less, and some businesses say they simply will have to raise rates.

Erika Tate of Fresno, who just bought a new car, said she could only afford to put \$20 worth in her tank Tuesday.

It's a rare occurrence when our politicians miss an opportunity to tax us. But they are missing a big one. We pay multi-taxes on gasoline. It goes to build, improve and maintain our roads and highways. The more gasoline we buy — theoretically — we cause more wear and tear on our roads and highways, so we pay for it.

Now what about our propane, all-electric, cooking-oil conversions and hybrid vehicles? They are driving millions of miles free.

As time progresses we'll be using less and less gasoline. What will happen to our roads and highways?

We'll have to get the dollars somehow. Avenues of "tax-invasion" are exhausted. The more the tax coffers build up, the sloppier the oversight becomes.

I believe Caltrans has already seen the creeping change. I'm not against clean air and less dependence on oil, but shouldn't everyone pay their fair share?

*Sheldon S. Olson, Fresno*

[Letter to the San Diego Union-Tribune, Saturday, Sept. 5, 2009:](#)

### **Ticket loud motorcycles**

Encinitas has done a great job remaking its downtown, and it can be a great place to visit. However, a recent visit to the Leucadia Artwalk on Aug. 30 was very unpleasant due to the excessively loud noise of motorcycles.

Motorcycles do not have to be loud. The Environmental Protection Agency sets noise emission standards for motorcycles at 80 decibels, which is 10 decibels louder than a car traveling at 40 miles an hour, so mufflers on new motorcycles are fairly quiet. All motorcycles are required to display two EPA labels — one on the chassis and one on the exhaust pipe.

It is my hope that Encinitas will implement the EPA label match-up system and start fining bikers who have installed illegal mufflers. Encinitas citizens and visitors deserve to be protected from harmful noise and air pollution.

*Tim Wright, Encinitas*

[Letter to the Contra Costa Times & Tri-Valley Herald, Monday, Sept. 7, 2009:](#)

### **Green ideas**

A new study reported in the journal *Pediatrics* links the exposure of mothers during pregnancy to polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), prevalent in areas of heavy car traffic and idling, to lower IQs in their children by age 5.

Since auto emissions are already bad for the planet and our lungs, why won't Walnut Creek enact an anti-idling ordinance as New York City has, where anyone idling a parked car more than three minutes (delivery trucks exempt) is fined \$360 first offense, no ifs, ands or buts?

The results are improved Big Apple air quality, and the fines fund schools, parks, libraries.

For that matter, why doesn't Walnut Creek ban leaf blowers, as Moraga and Los Angeles have? A single leaf blower in one hour produces as much pollution as a mid-sized automobile driven from New York to Washington, D.C.

Why doesn't "green" Walnut Creek have a single recycling container in all of downtown for public use, and an ordinance against shops, stores, boutiques persisting in blocking open their doors with their air conditioning on?

*Michael Scott, Walnut Creek*

[Letter to the O.C. Register, Sunday, Sept. 6, 2009:](#)

### **Letters: Unocal did it first and better**

Ray LaHood, U.S. secretary of transportation, was ecstatic about the "wildly popular" Cash for Clunkers (CARS) program that replaced 690,114 old cars with a like number of new ones having better miles per gallon. It was a good idea, but in some ways the \$3 billion was mismanaged. It took a large bureaucracy, dealers waited weeks for their reimbursement checks, and \$4,500 per car was overly generous.

Was the program a real economic stimulus or a one-month blip? Countless buyers admit that they were buying a new car this year anyway and simply took advantage of the \$4,500 giveaway.

It should be troubling to the administration that almost 60 percent of sales went to foreign-headquartered car manufacturers. General Motors and Chrysler lost 9.7 percent and 31 percent of their traditional market share under the CARS program.

Furthermore, many people are having "buyer's remorse" as monthly payments come due in these hard times. Others believe that dealers reduced their normal discounts and some even hiked their prices as

dealer stocks of high-MPG cars were being depleted. But even more shocking is the disclosure that the \$4,500 rebate is taxable income for the buyer. Consider for example, a person in the 30-percent tax bracket who traded in a car worth \$3,500 in the used-car market. By accepting the \$4,500 rebate he did not gain \$1,000. Instead, next April he will face additional income tax of \$1,350 and he will lose \$350 on the transaction.

In contrast to the government program, Unocal introduced the South Coast Recycled Auto Program (SCRAP) in 1990 and received one of the Environmental Protection Agency's highest environmental awards that later became an amendment to the Clean Air Act. The program had two significant benefits. It got older fuel-inefficient cars off the road and dramatically reduced tailpipe emissions. Unocal's volunteer \$7 million expenditure was oversubscribed by 20 percent and acclaimed a resounding success.

With only a half-dozen or so dedicated people Unocal processed 8,376 pre-1971 cars in just a few months. The DMV verified ownership and registration and owners got their \$700 check on the same day, plus a free bus pass. Before being smashed, every car was tested for tailpipe emissions by the Southern California Air Quality Management District. The average car had hydrocarbon emissions 99 times as great as a (new at the time) 1990 Honda Civic.

Based on Unocal's success, the CARS rebate should have been only \$1,000 to \$1,500, tax free. That would have spread the \$3 billion over two or three million new car sales and extended momentum throughout the rest of the year. Furthermore, the scrap value of two million cars could have been nearly \$1 billion to offset the initial rebates.

As an adjunct to the new-car program, the government could have encouraged the private sector or volunteers to take the program one step further. Many of the trade-ins were relatively good cars with moderate, if not great MPG.

Couldn't these cars have been offered free to anyone at or near the poverty line who owned a real old clunker for scrapping? It would have cost the taxpayers nothing, the poor would have had a better safer car and the environment would have improved.

To my knowledge, no one in government ever contacted a single Unocal person about SCRAP. We deserve better when the government spends our money.

*Richard J. Stegemeier, Anaheim  
retired CEO of Unocal*

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses US government will give millions of dollars to install solar panels. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

### **Gobierno entrega millones de dólares para paneles solares**

La Opinión, Saturday, Sept. 5, 2009

Califica este artículo:

WASHINGTON (EFE).- El Gobierno de Estados Unidos dará un aval por valor de 535 millones de dólares a la empresa Solyndra para la construcción de una planta de fabricación de paneles solares, anunció hoy el vicepresidente, Joseph Biden.

El dinero proviene del programa de estímulo económico de 787 mil millones de dólares, que esta semana cumple 200 días.

Los fondos financiarán la construcción de la primera fase de una nueva fábrica de Solyndra, que producirá paneles fotovoltaicos cilíndricos capaces de dar electricidad a 24 mil hogares en un año.

Los aparatos están diseñados para cubrir tejados grandes y planos.

Biden, quien coordina el programa de estímulo económico del Gobierno, hizo el anuncio en una intervención por satélite en un acto celebrado en la sede de Solyndra en Fremont (California), en el que participó in situ el secretario de Energía, Steven Chu.

"Con la inversión en la infraestructura y tecnología del futuro, no sólo estamos creando trabajos hoy, sino que establecemos la base para el crecimiento a largo plazo", señaló el vicepresidente.

Las instalaciones de Solyndra financiadas con ayuda del Ejecutivo montarán paneles con capacidad para generar 7 gigavatios de energía durante la vida operativa del proyecto, equivalente a la electricidad generada por entre tres y cuatro plantas térmicas a base de carbón, según la Casa Blanca.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses vice-president Joe Biden inaugurates million dollar investment with a solar energy plant in California.](#)

### **Inaugura vicepresidente Biden inversión millonaria de planta solar en California**

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Monday, Sept. 7, 2009

El vicepresidente, Joe Biden declaró en California que Estados Unidos atraviesa por un periodo de mejoramiento de eficiencia energética.

"Nos encontramos en un viaje en algún sentido cada vez más cercano al sol, hacia un Estados Unidos con mayor energía solar. Y mientras lo hacemos, vivimos en la penumbra de un pasado menos eficiente y más dañino del que nos alejamos", declaró Biden..

El vicepresidente anunció la primera partida presupuestaria de 550 millones de dólares para ampliar la fábrica de paneles solares, Solyndra, en el área de la Bahía de San Francisco.

Agregó que la administración del presidente, Barck Obama invertirá 30 mil millones de dólares en proyectos de creación de energía limpia.

El vicepresidente ejemplificó que el dinero que invierta del paquete de estímulo económico en energía creará empleos temporales y permanentes.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses it costs more every day to reverse climate change.](#)

### **Cada día cuesta más revertir el cambio climático**

Isabel Saco

La Opinión, Sept. 5, 2009

(PNUMA), Achim Steiner, tras advertir de lo grave que sería que no se alcance un acuerdo a ese respecto en la próxima Conferencia de Copenhague.

"Desde un punto de vista racional, después de toda la evidencia científica y las negociaciones realizadas, sería un grave retroceso para la comunidad internacional y para cada ciudadano del mundo (no alcanzar ese acuerdo para limitar el cambio climático)", sostuvo el representante de la ONU.

Cuando sólo quedan quince días de negociaciones sustantivas en Copenhague para lograr un entendimiento, Steiner pidió pensar en el enorme coste de revertir el fenómeno climático si se permite que haya una generación más con plantas eléctricas alimentadas por combustibles.

Los 184 países signatarios del Protocolo de Kioto sobre el Cambio Climático se reunirán del 7 al 18 de diciembre próximo en Copenhague con el objetivo de adoptar un nuevo acuerdo, que establezca nuevos límites en las emisiones de gases causantes del calentamiento del planeta, así como estrategias de adaptación a este fenómeno.

A ese respecto, el responsable del PNUMA enfatizó que "no hay plan B" en caso de que la reunión de Copenhague fracase e instó a que se logre un entendimiento porque está comprobado que "ningún país puede protegerse a sí mismo del calentamiento global".

Steiner reveló que una de las dificultades del proceso negociador reside en la necesidad de que los países industrializados acepten recortes significativos de sus emisiones, lo que sería una clara señal de que asumen su responsabilidad histórica en la aceleración del cambio climático.