

Hydrogen power plant project to undergo yearlong study

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Aug. 27, 2009

A hydrogen power plant proposed to be built seven miles west of Bakersfield took a step forward Wednesday as the state Energy Commission voted 4-0 to undertake a yearlong study of the \$2 billion project.

The commission found Long Beach-based Hydrogen Energy California's application for a 250-megawatt plant to be adequate.

Wednesday's vote means the commission will now consider whether the project meets the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, which takes into account factors including environmental impacts and public health and safety.

The 473-acre project would convert coal or petroleum coke into hydrogen for fuel, and pump about 90 percent of the carbon dioxide byproduct underground for use in oil wells. The gas would then be stored permanently in underground formations.

HECA, as the company and the project are known, has not yet made a decision whether to proceed with the project. It has been awarded \$308 million in federal stimulus money by the U.S. Department of Energy; that money is to be doled out as the project reaches certain milestones.

HECA would begin construction in 2011 if it gets green lights from the commission and the company itself. It would begin operating at full scale by 2014.

Valley expects to get delay for ozone cleanup

By Mark Grossi

The Fresno Bee, Wed., Aug. 26, 2009

Ending years of debate, federal officials are about to grant an 11-year delay for the San Joaquin Valley's ozone cleanup campaign.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is scheduled to publish its proposed approval in the Federal Register in the next few days, and it will become official by the end of September.

The action pushes the deadline to 2024, an extension the local air district requested more than two years ago after stormy public discussions with activists. Officials said it was impossible to clean up the air so quickly in one of the nation's most fouled air basins.

But more could have been done for residents, who must suffer more than a decade longer than they should have, said Kathryn Phillips of the Environmental Defense Fund in Sacramento.

"I'm disappointed and feel especially heartbroken for the people, especially children and elderly, who have compromised health already and will have to endure even more years of bad air in the Valley," she said.

Officials at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said the EPA should have blessed the 2024 deadline years ago. Executive director Seyed Sadredin said the agency set an unrealistically early deadline of 2013 to dodge a fight with activists.

"The EPA did it this way for political convenience," he said.

Federal officials responded that the Clean Air Act directs them to assign deadlines by using a formula based on concentrations of ozone. Officials this week said they will agree to the extension in the next few months because the district has proved that it cannot hit the 2013 target.

"It's up to the state and the district to figure out how to achieve the standard in the shortest time possible," said Kerry Drake, associate director of the EPA's regional air division, based in San Francisco. "If they find they can't do it, then they ask for an extension."

The extension comes with strings. New and expanding businesses will spend more money now on air-quality permits. Several hundred smaller farms must now begin paying permit fees and accounting for pollution.

EPA took more than two years to answer the request, Drake said, because the agency also was studying the same issue for other California districts.

EPA will grant delays for other California air districts, including South Coast, Coachella Valley and Sacramento. The delays range from four to 11 years.

The state has the worst ozone problem in the nation. Ozone is a corrosive gas that forms on warm days in sunlight as vehicle exhaust combines with fumes from such sources as dairies, paint and gasoline. Ozone triggers lung problems, including asthma and bronchitis.

In 2008, the Valley led the nation in ozone violations.

Because of the health problems, Valley activists pushed hard to keep the 2013 deadline. Air officials said that even if all Valley businesses were closed, the deadline could not be met.

The biggest hurdle is replacement of diesel trucks, which could cost billions of dollars over the next decade. Diesel engines are the largest source of nitrogen oxides, a primary building block of ozone.

The local air district has little control over the engines, which are regulated by the California Air Resources Board.

But activists said the air district could have required high-tech add-on devices to control diesel pollution, rather than relying on replacing engines over time.

Activists also suggested more stringent rules, such as prohibiting the use of older farm tractors, trucks and vehicles on bad-air days.

Port of L.A. is urged to stop lobbying over clean-trucks program

The port wants permission to regulate truckers as part of its effort to reduce air pollution.

Trade groups object, saying that would make it easier for unions to organize the drivers.

By Ronald D. White, staff writer

L.A. Times, Wed., Aug. 26, 2009

Several of the nation's biggest trade associations have fired a warning shot across the bow of the Port of Los Angeles, urging it to cease lobbying efforts to change a federal law that could greatly affect the way cargo is hauled into and out of the nation's seaports.

The warning came Tuesday in a letter signed by 24 groups representing U.S. retailers, agricultural interests, apparel and textile firms, trucking groups and logistics officials.

It's a response to the port's recent hiring of Atlanta-based Gephardt Group to try to change part of the Federal Aviation Administration Authorization Act to help reduce air pollution at the port.

Federal law considers the truckers who haul freight at the port to be independent owner-operators who have no collective bargaining rights and can't join forces to raise pay rates. It also forbids governments from regulating the prices, routes or services of a trucking company.

The port contends that it can meet its environmental obligations and ensure that the ports are served by cleaner trucks only if the trucks are maintained by large companies or concessions. The port's plan is to turn many independent truckers into employees of concessions. The American Trucking Assn. has brought a federal lawsuit that seeks to have the concession plan barred.

The trucking group and the signers of the letter say changing the law would make it easier for unions to organize truck drivers at the port while American businesses are struggling.

The port's new plan would change the law to establish a 50-mile zone around the port where it would have limited regulatory authority.

The letter objects: "We strongly oppose the efforts of the port to support changing long-standing federal law . . . to include a provision within the Clean Truck Plan that has nothing to do with reducing truck emissions."

Port officials said in a statement that the law didn't envision the severe pollution problems they are trying to address.

The law should be updated to clarify its limits "and protect the rights of states and ports to have effective programs," the statement said.

Multiple fires, lack of breeze choke LA, SoCal

By Raquel Maria Dillon - Associated Press Writer

In the Modesto Bee, Thursday, Aug. 27, 2009

LOS ANGELES -- Firefighters in Southern California braced for another day of hot, extremely dry weather as they battled two wildfires in the Angeles National Forest northeast of Los Angeles, while crews worked to contain another blaze in a rural area of Northern California that consumed a mobile home.

A fast-moving wildfire started Wednesday afternoon about 20 miles southwest of King City in Monterey County and consumed more than 3 square miles of grassy, rolling hills, Division Chief Curt Itson of the state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said.

The fire was 30 percent contained early Thursday, Itson said, but residents of 20 homes near the tiny community of Lockwood evacuated voluntarily. The cause of the blaze was under investigation.

Northeast of Los Angeles, two wildfires [fouled the air](#) for millions of Southern Californians, but the flames were burning away from foothill suburbs and no homes were threatened.

The National Weather Service predicted another hot, dry day Thursday with moderate mph winds out of the west, very low humidity and temperatures as high as 104 degrees at low elevations of the Angeles National Forest.

Stoked by the arrival of high temperatures and extremely dry air after weeks of unusually mild summer weather, the 2.6-square mile Morris Fire in Angeles National Forest produced a pungent white haze that spread through the Los Angeles Basin and east into San Bernardino County. The smoke lingered for lack of a sea breeze.

"It's pretty bad, the smoke," said Natacha Cuvelier, a 20-year-old student at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. "Once I stepped out of the door, I could smell it."

The air was considered unhealthy in many areas, and regional officials urged people to avoid strenuous activities, indoor and out.

Schools were advised to suspend physical education and sports, said Dr. Jonathan Fielding, Los Angeles County's director of public health.

"Sometimes when we have these fires that will last for several days, the smoke can kind of build and get sloshed back and forth, so to speak," said Sam Atwood, spokesman for the South Coast Air Quality Management District. "With each successive day, the extent of the smoke will get bigger and bigger."

Late Wednesday, a new fire erupted in the Los Angeles suburb of La Canada Flintridge. At least 20 acres had burned by evening with 20 percent containment, U.S. Forest Service spokesman Bruce Quintelier said.

The weather service has issued a fire danger warning for mountain areas stretching from Los Angeles County northwest through Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, but the forecast did not call for any strong Santa Ana winds that typically stoke the worst Southern California wildfires.

HIGH SCHOOLS: Brush fire disrupts football practices, preparations

By Miguel A. Melendez, Staff Writer
L.A. Daily News, Thursday, August 27, 2009

A blaze in the Angeles National Forest producing poor air quality across the San Gabriel Valley forced some high school football teams on Wednesday to cancel or restrict outdoor activities.

The fire, which broke out Tuesday afternoon on both sides of Highway 39 near Morris Dam Reservoir, has burned 750 acres. Chris Rush, an Angeles National Forest dispatcher, said the blaze was less than 10 percent contained early Wednesday.

The County of Los Angeles Public Health issued an air quality alert and urged individuals to take precautions where there's visible smoke or an odor of smoke.

"All individuals are urged to be cautious and to avoid unnecessary outdoor activities," said Jonathan E. Fielding, director of Public Health. "We are also advising schools that are in session in smoke-impacted areas to suspend outside physical activities in these areas, including physical education and after-school sports until conditions improve."

While some teams are done with two-a-day practices and begin preparation for next week's season opener (Week 0), other teams which don't kick off until two weeks from now (Week 1) and still have two-a-days scheduled are having to find ways to fill time for their morning sessions.

Coaches said they will focus on a light walk-through, watching film and hitting the weight room, activities usually reserved for afternoon sessions.

Rosemead High School football coach Matt Koffler said school and district officials canceled all outdoor activity before the team got on the field for its two-hour morning practice.

"We hung out in the morning and stuck around until further notice," Koffler said. "Later we'll go inside the gym, watch some film and do some push-ups, sit-ups and plyometric stuff to keep busy."

Koffler said the interruption would not affect the Panthers' readiness.

"We're set and ready to play if we had to go today," said Koffler, whose Panthers scrimmage South Pasadena next week. South Pasadena canceled practice Wednesday.

Damien coach Greg Gano said he's waiting to hear from school administrators to see if they'll cancel outdoor practice in the afternoon or go ahead as planned.

Glendora coach Mark Pasquarella said the Tartans would practice in one of the school's gyms.

Monrovia, which ended two-a-days on Tuesday, had a walk-through in the gym and watched film Wednesday.

"The way it's looking right now we won't be doing any running," Wildcats coach Ryan Maddox said. "We'll review plays, watch some films so, yeah, it will affect practice."

Maddox, who got a text from Monrovia athletic director Randy Bell about the limited practice, said there's no timetable on the imposed practice restrictions.

Whether it affects preparation for next week's opener at home against Arcadia is uncertain.

"I hope not," Maddox said. "Hopefully this will be a one-day thing. We'll play it day by day, but what could be affecting us is probably affecting (Arcadia). Hopefully it'll clear up."

Area coaches seem to be getting used to wildfires infringing on their practice schedule.

Last year, the Sierra Madre fire postponed the start of spring practice across the San Gabriel Valley and beyond.

"It was about three times worse than it's out there now," Koffler said. "Hopefully everything turns out OK. We'll get through it."

Multiple fires, lack of breeze choke LA, SoCal

By Raquel Maria Dillon, The Associated Press
In the San Diego Union-Tribune, Thursday, August 27, 2009

LOS ANGELES — Firefighters in Southern California braced for another day of hot, extremely dry weather as they battled two wildfires in the Angeles National Forest northeast of Los Angeles, while crews worked to contain another blaze in a rural area of Northern California that consumed a mobile home.

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Fairbanks pondering how to clear the air

The Associated Press
In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Thursday, August 27, 2009

FAIRBANKS, Alaska—Many of the 70 people attending a Fairbanks Borough Air Pollution Control Commission meeting asked for more study before restrictions are imposed on wood- or coal-burning stoves.

The Fairbanks Daily News-Miner reports one participant at Tuesday's meeting, Laura Sliney, said she doubted she could afford to replace her wood stove, even with financial help through a proposed program.

The Borough Assembly voted last week to let voters have a say during the Oct. 6 election on how air pollution prevention programs should be run.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation has said it will draft and enforce pollution-prevention measures if local officials decline to do so.

Ark. power plant opponents file new objection

The Associated Press

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Thursday, August 27, 2009

LITTLE ROCK, Ark.—Two environmental groups asked state regulators Wednesday to deny a permit for the construction of a coal-fired power plant in southwest Arkansas, saying it would violate the federal Clean Air Act.

In a six-page brief, the Sierra Club and National Audubon Society asked the Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission to examine the issue at its next meeting. The two groups warn the permit for the \$1.6 billion coal-fired plant in Hempstead County, wanted by Southwestern Electric Power Co., didn't take into account the impact of small particles that would be released by plant.

The groups wrote that regulators at the Environmental Protection Agency recently overturned a permit for a similar coal-fired plant in Kentucky on those grounds.

"The permit approved (by the state) does not satisfy the requirements of the Clean Air Act," the groups wrote. "If the commission fails to follow the federal law ... then EPA will veto the commission's permit decision."

Peter Main, a SWEPCO spokesman, said the company's permit for the plant was already one of the most stringent in the nation. Main said the company would file a response in the coming days.

In June, the Arkansas Court of Appeals overturned a permit by the Public Service Commission for the plant. SWEPCO filed a request with the state Supreme Court to review the ruling.

SWEPCO is a subsidiary of Columbus, Ohio-based American Electric Power, among the largest electric utilities in the country. SWEPCO has 111,000 customers in Arkansas and 340,000 more in Louisiana and Texas. Regulators in those states had already approved the plant, which would affect ratepayers there. The company filed papers with the Arkansas Public Service Commission in January 2006.

Ceco Environmental gets \$4.4M in orders

By Associated Press

In the N.Y. Times, S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Wednesday, August 26, 2009

CINCINNATI, (AP) -- Air pollution control and industrial ventilation systems maker Ceco Environmental Corp. said Wednesday it received \$4.4 million in new orders.

The orders were received by companies in its equipment and contracting groups, the company said. The largest purchase order came from the refining industry, and others came from the power, steel, glass, and pet food industries.

Company CEO Phillip DeZwirek said the company continues to pursue international business "vigorously," and two of the projects are in Indonesia and South America.

Shares rose a penny to \$3.40 in afternoon trading.

[L.A. Times editorial, Wed., Aug. 26, 2009:](#)

Global warming on trial?

Despite a lack of precedent or applicable law, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce wants a hearing to make the EPA provide evidence that climate change endangers Americans.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, seeking to make monkeys of the legions of scientists who have suggested that climate change is a significant problem, wants to put them on trial. Specifically, it wants the Environmental Protection Agency to stage a "Scopes monkey trial" for the 21st century, appointing a judge to hear evidence on the question of whether global warming endangers Americans' health.

It's an intriguing idea. Congress is considering legislation aimed at fighting climate change that would force the country to reinvent its entire energy infrastructure. Separately, the EPA is weighing an "endangerment finding" that would authorize the agency to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. Thus the federal government may be embarking on a very expensive course -- all to head off a threat that many Americans don't understand or don't believe to be a threat at all. Wouldn't it be great if we could just stage a big trial, weigh the evidence and decide whether any of this makes sense? Maybe we could even get Judge Judy to preside.

Yet the trouble with the chamber's petition, which it filed Tuesday with the EPA, is that it has little basis in precedent or law. It's true that the EPA sometimes holds hearings before administrative law judges when the legality of its regulations is challenged, but the chamber wants it to hold such a hearing before any regulation has been approved, and the judge to rule not on a law but on the scientific basis for making a law. This has a whiff of a political stunt designed to fail -- and when it does, to give the chamber a pretext for accusing the Obama administration of not giving a fair hearing to scientific arguments that challenge mainstream climate-change theory.

Courts and judges are for resolving questions of law, not of science. Though the 1926 Scopes trial is often remembered as a contest between evolution and creationism, it actually concerned the legality of a Tennessee law forbidding the teaching of Charles Darwin's theory.

Environmentalists can be dismayingly smug about climate change, sometimes claiming that the science is "settled" and there's nothing left to argue about. Scientific theories are very seldom settled; they are continually tested and revised based on the latest findings. That's why regulatory decisions are best made by consulting the scientific literature, not judges or juries (or environmental activists). The weight of scientific evidence suggests very strongly that the globe is getting warmer, that greenhouse gases emitted by humans are the cause and that the health and welfare of future generations are under serious threat. That might make for a lousy show on Court TV, but it should be enough to prompt action by the EPA.

[Letter to the Contra Costa Times & Tri-Valley Herald, Thursday, August 27, 2009:](#)

Healthy jobs

Thank you, Times, for your excellent Aug. 20 editorial, "Ball in Chevron court," concerning the Richmond refinery.

As you so rightly point out, if Chevron contends it will not be refining heavier, dirtier crude oil, then it should have no objection to putting this in writing with a verifiable process to ensure compliance.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit — Communities for a Better Environment, Asian Pacific Environmental Network and West County Toxics Coalition — have stated, in their open letter to Chevron dated Aug. 10, that completing this simple step would protect our health and allow the project to continue, with workers getting back on the job right away.

I invite Chevron to respond affirmatively to this letter as soon as possible.

I also invite the hard working men and women in the Building Trades Council to join others in the labor movement who are advocating for healthy jobs by reminding Chevron that the ball is, indeed, in their court.

On Aug. 15, more than 500 people gathered and marched on the streets of Richmond calling for climate justice and insisting Richmond can have clean air and good jobs. Certainly, we need both.

Mayor Gayle McLaughlin, Richmond

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses China can not stop acid rain even though they have been able to reduce their SO2 emissions. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

China no logra frenar la lluvia ácida pese a la reducción de emisiones de SO2

El Periodico de Mexico, Thursday, August 27, 2009

Pekín, (EFE).- China consiguió reducir en cuatro años un 9 por ciento sus emisiones de dióxido de azufre (SO2), principal causante según los científicos de la lluvia ácida, pero ésta sigue afectando el país a los mismos niveles que antes por la llegada de nuevos contaminantes a su atmósfera, según un estudio publicado hoy.

El estudio científico, del que se hace eco la revista económica especializada "Caijing", indica que China ha logrado que las emisiones de dióxido de azufre hayan bajado hasta los 23,21 millones de toneladas en 2008, lo que no se ha visto acompañado de una reducción de la lluvia ácida, que afecta a la mayor parte de las zonas habitadas del país.

Ello, según los investigadores, se debe a un aumento en ese mismo periodo del 40 por ciento en las emisiones de óxidos de nitrógeno, procedentes, al igual que el SO2, de las centrales de energía térmica (obtenida del carbón, principal fuente de energía en China).

La reducción de SO2 supone que China está cumpliendo los objetivos de reducción de emisiones que se había fijado en el plan quinquenal 2006-2010, pero al precio de aumentar la contaminación con partículas que no estaban incluidas en los planes de mejora medioambiental.

Yang Jintian, experto del Ministerio de Protección Medioambiental chino citado por "Caijing", reconoció que este proceso "ha anulado parcialmente los efectos positivos de la reducción de emisiones de dióxido de azufre" y pidió nuevas regulaciones para eliminar los contaminantes no controlados.

La información se publica el mismo día en el que el Legislativo chino ha aprobado una nueva ley para regular la lucha del país asiático contra el cambio climático, con vistas a mejorar los controles de polución en el país que emite más dióxido de carbono (principal causante del efecto invernadero) en el planeta.

EEM

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses heat wave threatens California. Climate change and high temperatures could result in many deaths.](#)

Ola de calor amenaza a California Las temperaturas podrían causar muertes

Notimex, Wednesday, August 27, 2009

SAN DIEGO, California - El cambio climático en el Océano Pacífico va a generar intensas olas de calor que resultarán mortales en California, advirtió un estudio del Instituto de Oceanografía Scripps, en La Jolla, dado a conocer el miércoles.

Expertos culpan al cambio climático

El análisis tomó como referencia el estudio de una ola de calor que en tan sólo dos semanas del verano de 2006 ocasionó por lo menos 600 muertes en California.

El meteorólogo Alexander Gershunov señaló que en el Pacífico, frente a las costas de Baja California, México, el cambio climático produce una elevada temperatura que se mezcla con humedad y luego azota la costa de California.

El vapor que produce el sobrecalentamiento en el mar se convierte a su vez en el mayor elemento del llamado efecto invernadero, que impide a la atmósfera disipar la radiación solar y encierra el calor.

Comparativamente, el bióxido de carbono se traduce en 12 por ciento del efecto invernadero, pero el vapor marítimo alcanza a representar 80 por ciento de ese fenómeno.

El calor que produce el vapor es más prevaeciente en el Pacífico desde principios de la década de 1990, informó Gershunov en un comunicado divulgado el martes con embargo para este miércoles.

Sin embargo el ejemplo de la ola de calor de entre agosto y septiembre de 2006 fue muy claro para el estudio del Instituto Scripps, de la Universidad de California en San Diego (UCSD).

La ola de calor de ese año también mató 25 mil cabezas de ganado y unas 70 aves de corral. Esa racha causó una variedad de impactos sistémicos, de acuerdo con el comunicado.

Sucumbió 1.0 por ciento del ganado en California, lo que redujo la producción de leche en 10 por ciento; también hubo impactos significativos en la producción agrícola, en el consumo de energía, en la distribución de agua y una parte de la infraestructura se tensó casi a punto de quebrarse.

El estudio consideró estadísticas de calor desde 1948, que permitieron observar que las olas de calor van en aumento desde la década de los años 80, pero con mayor intensidad esta década.

"Las olas de calor en California son más húmedas ahora que antes, y no estamos aclimatados los seres vivos a esas condiciones húmedas y calientes", precisó el experto.