

## **Valley Air District wants to pay you to upgrade to a new electric mower**

ABC30, Friday, March 25, 2022

FRESNO, Calif. (KFSN) -- Do you have an old mower that you dread using this summer?

The Valley Air District is taking action and paying you to upgrade to a new electric model.

Here's how the deal works: You buy a new electric mower, then take your old mower to a qualified recycler for a certificate. You can trade for a check from the Valley Air District.

If you buy a mower that costs under \$200, you'll get half the cost back. Over that amount, you'll get either \$150 or \$250, depending on the cost.

If you don't have an old mower to trade in, you can still get a \$25 to \$50 dollar rebate.

Officials with the Valley Air District say the program is aimed at reducing emissions. They say one gas-powered mower can produce as many emissions as 12 new cars.

## **Arvin receives grant for electric buses and microgrid**

By Mason Rockfellow

KGET News, Friday March 25, 2022

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (KGET) — The Federal Transit Authority has given the City of Arvin a \$2.9 million grant to build a microgrid infrastructure and two more electric buses.

Not only will the microgrid and electric buses help reduce air pollution, thus improving the air quality. Powering the buses with clean renewable energy will also save the city money by lowering energy costs.

"The City is currently in the early planning stages of what will be an unprecedented project in a small rural disadvantaged community to construct a renewable source of solar power," said City Manager Jeff Jones. The microgrid will also save the City at least \$ 1 million in energy costs over the next ten years."

This is the next step for Arvin in efforts to have all buses powered by electricity by 2025, according to Transit Manager Hesham Elshazly. By taking this step Arvin hopes to reduce vehicle and carbon emissions while encouraging non-motorized and multimodal transportation.

"Arvin will also build more sidewalks bike paths, and plant trees throughout the community as its first line of attack against climate change," Elshazly said.

While Arvin continues to struggle with air quality, the electric buses and construction of the microgrid is a step in the right direction.

"In February 2021, Arvin, Lamont, and several surrounding communities were selected by the California Air Resources Board as an AB 617 community," Arvin's Grant Writer Christine Viterelli said. "This microgrid project further supports our City's desire to pursue clean transportation projects that reduce air pollution and energy dependency and provides multiple health benefits for the residents."

## **Refinery conversion project hits delay**

By John Cox

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, March 24, 2022

Plans to turn part of the former Big West oil refinery on Rosedale Highway into a renewable fuels plant have hit a speed bump.

Owner Global Clean Energy Holdings Inc. said this week that construction delays have pushed back the facility's expected reopening date to the third quarter of this year. As recently as November, the plan was to begin operation in the first quarter.

"We're being cautious and we're hoping for that," said Amanda Parsons DeRosier, the Torrance-based company's vice president of investor, community and public relations. She was unable to elaborate on the nature of the construction issue that forced the delay.

Construction-related delays are common in such projects, more so since the pandemic.

Bay Area refinery consultant Ian Goodman said converting the 65,000-barrel-per-day refinery presents special challenges because of the project's size and complexity. He said it's hard to foresee how much work will ultimately need to go into the project, making an opening date difficult to estimate.

"It's a very customized project," he said.

Beyond that, he said, assembling a proper workforce to complete such a project has been difficult during the pandemic. He noted it can be tough to work through logistics challenges and get materials, adding that he was unaware of the specific hurdles GCEH has encountered.

GCEH purchased the 65,000-barrel-per-day refinery in early 2020. It has shared plans to use only the property's southern portion to make 15,000 barrels of renewable diesel per day.

The project is the largest of its kind in the state and, locally, the highest-profile example to date of Kern's efforts to transition from the county's historical dependence on oil and gas to a cleaner-energy future.

A senior permitting official in Kern government, Lorelei Oviatt, said by email the delays have nothing to do with county requirements.

A spokeswoman for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said by email GCEH is in the process of making modifications to the property that will allow for production of renewable fuels. Spokeswoman Jaime Holt added the agency has issued a number of permits authorizing the company to make the necessary changes for converting the plant.

The refinery would take in used cooking oils, grease and rendered fats, along with a small but eventually larger amount of oil from a crop called camelina.

Besides renewable diesel, the property might also produce what's called renewable jet fuel. Both products emit relatively little smog-creating nitrous oxide and other pollutants when combusted. Additionally, the refinery is expected to put out little to no sulfur.

California consumes about 50,000 barrels per day of renewable diesel; that's about a fifth of the state's demand for diesel. Only about 2 percent of California's consumption of renewable diesel is produced in-state, with much of the rest being imported from Louisiana, Wyoming and Singapore.

Other facilities in Kern produce renewable diesel, but their output is small in comparison with GCEH's projections.

In November, GCEH's executive vice president of development and regulatory affairs, Noah Verleun, said the conversion process had run into minor problems because of global supply-chain challenges and the tight labor market. He added that the factors had introduced uncertainty about exactly when production will begin.

But he said hiring — there were about 60 employees at the plant then, with more expected to be recruited — hadn't generally proved difficult.

The last time the plant ran for 12 consecutive months was in 2012.

## **Tree Foundation of Kern coming back strong after pandemic-related funding drought**

By Steven Mayer

Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, March 26, 2022

Droughts can be tough on trees, but pandemics can be just as tough on nonprofits that care about trees.

Just ask Melissa Iger, a certified arborist who heads up the nonprofit Tree Foundation of Kern.

"This has been rough, really rough," Iger said of the past two years when the public health crisis caused a funding drought, and the foundation became unable to hold its traditional fundraising events.

"I had to be unemployed for 11 months," Iger said. "Our board secretary took over my responsibilities. It was not fun."

As Earth Day approaches in April, Iger is back in the arborist's seat, looking forward to adding to the number of trees the foundation has helped nurture over nearly three decades.

"We have planted about 20,000 trees in Kern County since 1994," she said of the young saplings that have gone to parks, schools, business districts and neighborhoods.

Thanks to the foundation's members, donors, corporate benefactors and grants, Iger and company have been able to beautify locations all over Kern County one tree at a time.

But recurring droughts in the San Joaquin Valley have resulted in the deaths of untold thousands of trees in what Iger refers to as "our urban forest." And she knows the Tree Foundation has some catching up to do.

Trees bring all sorts of benefits to the urban and suburban landscape and the people who live and work there, Iger said. There are numerous reasons to plant trees.

For example, they absorb the greenhouse gases that cause climate change. In exchange, they release oxygen into the breathable atmosphere.

And shade, a commodity that grows ever more valuable as summer approaches, "is so important," said Iger, the foundation's executive director.

"Besides providing shade, trees help reduce the urban heat island effect," she said of the phenomenon that causes concrete and asphalt cities to magnify and retain summer heat much longer than areas where lawns and shade trees soften the cityscape.

Of course, part of Iger's job is educating the public — including schoolchildren — about the importance of trees.

"Our trees provide cover and habitat for birds, insects and other animals," she said.

And they benefit our mental and physical health.

"They actually have a calming effect on people," she said. "They can quiet negative thinking."

In the southern valley, where the topography creates a bowl that traps air pollution where we breathe, trees help settle, trap and hold particulate pollutants such as dust, ash, pollen and smoke, benefiting air quality.

"Then the rains come and washes it into the soil," she said.

Trees can also help reduce ozone pollution, which is related to the formation of summer smog, one of Bakersfield's most serious public health challenges.

These urban forests, Iger refers to, are made up of urban parks, street trees, landscaped buildings, gardens, river corridors, nature preserves, and the trees and bushes we all enjoy in our own yards. Enriching that forest, she said, enriches our lives.

Now that she's back, Iger is looking forward to connecting again with area residents, supporters, volunteers and those willing to spare a few dollars to keep the foundation running and growing.

To that end, she is organizing Beer & Bonsai, scheduled on April 23 at Temblor Brewing. Attendees will get an introduction to the art of Bonsai, all while tasting some of Bakersfield's best beer.

"It's our first fundraiser since 2019," Iger said. "It's going to be so much fun."

For more information about the tree foundation, visit [treefoundationofkern.org](http://treefoundationofkern.org) or leave a message at 661-323-TREE (8733).