

## Group airs concept on cleanup incentives

By Mark Grossi, The Fresno Bee, April 25, 2003

A coalition led by local governments and industry will move quickly on an innovation to help San Joaquin Valley businesses and residents reduce taxes as they cut air pollution.

The biggest hurdle: Congress may need to pass a law to make the new idea possible, said an official for Operation Clean Air, a Valley campaign for voluntary pollution reduction. The law would create the first Air Quality Empowerment Zone, which would open the door to tax incentives for air cleanup efforts.

"It's an idea that seems to be playing well with everyone," said business lawyer Hal H. Bolen II, a steering committee member with the coalition. "It's not inconceivable that it could be done within the year."

Though this idea is still in its infancy, Operation Clean Air officials consider it a central part of their strategy. For instance, the zone could provide tax credits to businesses for retooling with clean-air technology and people who buy clean-running cars or ride mass transit.

Here's how tax credits work: If a resident owes \$1,000 in federal income tax, a \$100 tax credit would reduce the bill to \$900.

A preliminary proposal for the air quality zone also includes low- or no-interest loans to help public and private sectors invest in cleaner technology. Bolen said authorities could award tax credits and loans on a competitive basis -- meaning those who cut the most pollution will get the most credits or the biggest loans.

But who would be eligible for the credits and loans? Who decides? How much money in tax credits would be available? These and many other questions are still open.

"This is all in a draft stage right now," Bolen said. "We want to get feedback from legislators."

Several federal lawmakers representing the Valley, including Reps. George Radanovich, R-Mariposa, and Cal Dooley, D-Fresno, like the idea. Radanovich said it's possible the designation could be achieved by simply tweaking an Economic Empowerment Zone already in existence.

An Economic Empowerment Zone offers tax credits and other incentives to encourage businesses to locate in impoverished areas and hire people living in those areas. Because Fresno has such a zone, Radanovich believes officials should explore the idea of extending it to the rest of the Valley and make air quality part of the equation.

"To me, it's the best way to do it," Radanovich said. "I'd like to avoid legislation if that's possible."

Dooley said the zone would need strict requirements for poor air quality and poverty to make sure the whole country would not be eligible.

If legislation is needed, he said it would be wise to seek political alliance with other parts of the country that would benefit. The proposal would have to include federal cost and ways to justify the expense.

"I'm not sure what the price tag would be," he said. "It is unrealistic to think Congress would give the Valley a blank check."

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[Fresno Bee Editorial, April 25, 2003](#)

## Crippen fire lessons

Task force points out shortcomings in city policies, procedures.

The task force examining the debris pile fire that shrouded the city with foul, smoky clouds last winter has delivered its verdict -- the city blew it. Now the hard part begins.

The report, which appears both comprehensive and thorough, details 24 areas in which changes should be made in city policies and procedures. But the most important conclusion from the report may be this: The city just needs to do what it says it will do and what it is supposed to do.

Fresno officials have promised more effective code enforcement, which should have prevented the debris pile at Archie Crippen Excavation from reaching the size it attained in the first place. The mammoth size of the pile and the inattention to the nature of its contents were significant factors in the length of time it took to put the blaze out. That meant the effects -- especially the damages done to residents' health -- were more widespread and frightening than they might otherwise have been.

Increased code enforcement efforts are a must. They have been promised and they haven't materialized. That has to change.

Some other needed changes emerge from the task force report. Coordination between Fresno police and firefighters broke down at times, and that led to costly delays in fighting the fire.

Residents of the area went far too long without getting attention from officials. They needed information, help for family members affected by the thick smoke and -- perhaps most important -- reassurances that the city was working for them. Suspicions arose that the demographics of the neighborhood -- many poor families live there -- reduced the sense of urgency on the part of officials. Such suspicions, valid or not, are pernicious in the extreme. The city has a lot of work to do to repair its bridges to the community -- or build them in the first place in some cases.

The permits for the operations at the Crippen site were originally issued by Fresno County, before the area was annexed to the city. The task force correctly recommended that in such cases the city not simply "grandfather" in such permits, but instead do a more thorough job of examining whether the permitted uses are compatible with an urban setting.

The list of recommendations goes on, but it really boils down to two things: better communication on the city's part, with residents, businesses, other agencies and among its own departments, and insisting that people follow the rules. If the city can learn those lessons -- really learn them -- then the nasty cloud of the Crippen fire may turn out to have a silver lining after all.

## Kings County climate studied: Is it warming because of agriculture?

[Lemoore Advance, April 25, 2003](#)

The temperature on the San Joaquin Valley floor seems to be changing.

Data from the mid-1850s to current readings show a slight heating of night time temperature and a slight cooling in the daytime numbers. Some scientists have suggested that this change is the result of air pollution, or an over-all climatic shift.

But Dr. John Christy, director of the University of Alabama, Huntsville, Earth System Science Center has another theory. He thinks irrigation may be effecting the Valley's temperatures, especially in the summer.

According to data Valley minimum temperatures warmed at the rate of about 0.6 degrees each decade since information was taken at Fort Miller, now at the bottom of Millerton Lake, a manmade lake built to provide irrigation to the Valley, beginning in 1851. That amounts to a total warming of four degrees.

"In the Valley floor you have a significant warming," explained Christy, a professor of atmospheric science. "But there is no overall change in temperatures in the Sierra Nevada. These two areas are influenced by the same climate and are within 10 miles of each other."

Christy believes something is happening within the Valley to cause the temperature to change and something that isn't happening in the mountains. He believes that something is irrigation.

"The Valley is a desert. Normally if the air is bone dry temperatures drop dramatically at night. If you dump a lot of water into the Valley, a lot of it evaporates, adding water vapor into the air near the ground so it can't cool off as much at night."

That theory is what Christy is going to test.

Data also shows that the Valley is cooling in the summer. Valley daytime temperatures since 1930 have cooled. Christy believes this change is also caused by irrigation.

"1930 is the start of full-scale irrigation to Valley farmland," said Christy. "Some of that water evaporates into the air and acts like the old housetop water cooler we used in our home when I grew up in Fresno. It keeps the air from getting as warm."

The study will cover Kings, Tulare, Fresno, Madera, Merced and Mariposa counties, an area that has more than 2 million formerly desert acres under irrigation.

Christy hopes that his study will help scientists test theories relating to global warming versus local and regional warming. Christy believes that the theory that the Valley is warming because of accumulations of carbon dioxide and other gases may not be correct.

"If the current theory was true then the foothills and surrounding mountains should be seeing some change in temperatures too," he said.

Studies should begin this summer.

## Planned wood-fire ban to be aired at meets

By MICHAEL G. MOONEY, Modesto Bee, April 25, 2003

A plan banning wood fires when pollution reaches unhealthy levels is set to be reviewed at public workshops early next month in Modesto, Fresno and Bakersfield.

Particulate-matter pollution -- caused by burning wood and other fuels -- is at its worst during winter months throughout the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which stretches from Lodi to Bakersfield.

Airborne particles include nitrates, microscopic pieces of fly ash, tiny drops of liquid, dust, smoke and soot.

In high concentrations, experts say, particulate matter can impair lung function and worsen bronchitis, as well as trigger asthma and heart attacks.

The workshops are scheduled as follows at air district offices:

May 5 -- 6:30 p.m., 990 E. Gettysburg Ave., Fresno.

May 6 -- 1:30 p.m., 2700 M St., Suite 275, Bakersfield.

May 7 -- 2 p.m., 4230 Kiernan Ave., Suite 130, Modesto.

Each office has video teleconferencing capability, so people can go to any of the offices to attend the workshops and/or participate, no matter where the actual workshops are taking place.

For example, Modesto-area residents can travel to the Kiernan Avenue office to participate in the Fresno or Bakersfield workshops.

The existing rule, adopted in 1993, calls for a voluntary ban on lighting fireplaces, wood-burning stoves and fireplace inserts when air pollution is at its worst. That version also bans the sale of anything but the most efficient, clean-burning devices.

In February 2002, however, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency determined that the rule did not satisfy the federal Clean Air Act.

Under the revised rule, lighting fireplaces, stoves and other wood-burning devices would be banned about 25 nights during the winter.

On the worst winter nights, air district officials say, wood smoke is responsible for up to one-third of the particulate air pollution in urban areas.

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## **Amtrak's valley route sees gain in ridership**

By ROBERT RODRIGUEZ, THE FRESNO BEE, April 25, 2003

Aggressive marketing efforts and high gasoline prices helped boost ridership on Amtrak trains traveling through the San Joaquin Valley.

From January through March, the number of passengers jumped by 12.7 percent this year to 179,990, compared with the same time last year.

Amtrak's San Joaquin line runs between Bakersfield and Oakland and Sacramento. The line includes stops in Stockton, Modesto, Denair-Turlock and Merced.

At Fresno's Amtrak station, the number of passengers rose by 18.3 percent from January through March, going up to 58,798.

Total ridership statewide increased by 18.5 percent for the same time period.

Amtrak and state officials welcomed the increases, given that the nationwide passenger rail service teetered toward financial collapse last year.

"In an age when public transportation has struggled to remain competitive, it is gratifying to see the partnership between Amtrak and Caltrans produce such continued strong ridership results," said Tony Harris, chief deputy director of the California Department of Transportation.

Caltrans provides Amtrak \$75 million a year to help operate its rail network that shuttles passengers along the coast, in the valley, and between the Bay Area and Sacramento.

Passengers at the Fresno Amtrak station Tuesday said discount ticket offers, more direct routes and escalating gasoline prices all contributed to their decision to take the train.

Lyn Kelley of San Diego, who was visiting relatives in the area, said gasoline for her sport utility vehicle would have been more expensive than the price of her \$70 round-trip train ticket.

"It just made more sense to take the train," said Kelley, who was traveling with her 16-year-old daughter, Kristin.

"And on the train you can relax, get something to eat and stretch out. It's just more comfortable than being in a car or plane."

The difficulty of getting a direct airline flight from Fresno to San Diego also made train travel more attractive, Kelley said.

Ethel Harrigan of Sanger takes Amtrak's San Joaquin train at least twice a month to visit her children in Northern California. She, like others, said the price of gas is a factor.

"It's sometimes cheaper on the train, and you don't have to worry about the traffic," Harrigan said.

Sarah Swain, an Amtrak spokeswoman, said programs that encourage train travel among schoolchildren, special fares and the rising cost of other forms of travel all contribute to increased ridership.

"People who travel are looking at all of their options, and they are finding rail to be a good alternative to driving," Swain said. "And with the additional frequency of some trains, people are taking advantage."

In March 2002, Amtrak added a second round trip between Bakersfield and Sacramento. Before the direct service was added, northbound passengers had to take buses between Stockton and Sacramento.

## **AIR POLLUTION VIOLATIONS**

The Bakersfield Californian, April 24, 2003

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has issued the following citations against businesses suspected of violating pollution rules. For more information, call the district at 326-6900.

Delano Energy in Delano was cited Feb. 4 for failing to submit a 10-day, follow-up report for the January breakdown.

Doyle Ellis in Bakersfield was cited Feb. 4 for an odor from operations causing a public nuisance.

Cheese and Protein International LLC in Tulare was cited Feb. 3 for a monthly portable analyzer measurement showing nitrogen oxide to be above the permitted limit. No notification was given to the district.

Northridge Equipment Company in Bakersfield was cited Feb. 3 for failing to maintain current volatile organic compound and coatings usage records as required.

Bakersfield Auto Body in Bakersfield was cited Feb. 3 for using a spray gun that is not HULP compliant.

Castle Peak Resources LLC in Bakersfield was cited Feb. 3 for pressure-vacuum vents not remaining vapor-tight.

Harvest Containers Co. Inc. in Lindsay was cited Feb. 3 for a flue gas recirculation valve not being inspected on a weekly basis.

Salvador Chipres in Lamont was cited Feb. 3 for burning tumbleweeds without a permit on a no-burn day.

Valley Pacific Petroleum Systems Inc./Bob's Petro in Porterville was cited Feb. 3 for a loading rack not vapor-tight; threading connection leaking at 10,000 ppm and rate greater than three drops a minute.

Chad Tafti in Goshen was cited March 31 for operating with a suspended permit.

Owl Energy Resources in Irvine was cited March 28 for equipment not being constructed in accordance with the authority to construct.

San Joaquin Refining Company of Bakersfield was cited March 28 for operating with authorized modifications before a Title V Modification Application was submitted to the district.

Aera Energy LLC in McKittrick was cited March 28 for failing to submit breakdown follow-up reports within 10 days after the breakdown was corrected.

Stocker Resources in Los Angeles was cited March 26 in Kern County for having equipment that does not match permit.

Chevron USA Inc. in Bakersfield was cited March 26 for operating modified equipment before a Title V Modification Application was received by the district; fuel meter not operational, violating permit conditions.

Stocker Resources in Los Angeles was cited March 25 in Kern County for testing not being performed by deadline.

Recot Inc. in Bakersfield was cited March 25 for coater/dryer exceeding the permitted particulate matter limit.

AES Delano Inc. in Delano was cited March 25 for exceeding permitted emission limits for nitrogen oxide.

Heritage Railway Service in Bakersfield was cited March 24 for installing and operating nonexempt IC engine without an authority to construct and permit to operate; leaks exceeding 10,000 ppm allowed by authority to construct.

Crimson Resource Management in Bakersfield was cited March 20 in Taft for failing to conduct source test within 60 days of start-up as required; exceeding nitrogen oxide and carbon monoxide emission limits.

Elk Corporation in Shafter was cited March 19 for failing to conduct portable analyzer monitoring.

Chevron USA Inc. in Fellows was cited March 19 for operator error causing the steam generators at the Midway Steam Plant to shut down. The collected vapors were then routed and burned in the flare. Permit restricts the use of the flare to breakdown conditions.

## **California power officials say blackouts unlikely this summer**

By DON THOMPSON, Associated Press Writer

Published in the Bakersfield Californian, April 24, 2003

SACRAMENTO (AP) - Californians can expect to avoid blackouts again this summer, though conserving electricity remains a good idea, the managers of the state's power grid said Thursday.

That's a far cry from two years ago, when the California Independent System Operator ordered rolling blackouts on seven days and declared 30 Stage 3 emergencies when power supplies ran dangerously low.

"We should be able to meet the demand for energy with no trouble - barring unforeseen circumstances," said ISO Vice President Jim Detmers. Those circumstances, however, could include the loss of power plants or transmission lines at the same time heat waves boost energy demand.

Continued energy conservation "gives us a greater margin if equipment fails or we have to limit the amount of electricity flowing on a transmission line due to fires," he said.

Detmers urged consumers to avoid extra electricity use during what he termed the afternoon and early evening "air conditioning rush hour." That can also help hold down monthly power bills, he said.

A report Thursday by the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group lauded California residents and businesses for their conservation efforts, which they said helped the state's economy and minimize outages during the state's power crisis.

The California Energy Commission, meanwhile, said consumers have sustained much of their conservation efforts despite the more abundant electricity. That's saved millions of dollars and tons of pollutants, the commission said.

The state's Flex Your Power energy conservation and efficiency campaign won a leadership award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Energy.

This year, the ISO estimates the state should have at least 8 percent more power available than it needs. That's in part because more than 900 megawatts of new generation became available early this year and another 2,700 megawatts are expected to come on line before June. One megawatt is enough to power about 750 homes.

The state may have limited hydroelectricity because of below-normal snowfall in the Sierra Nevada range and throughout the Pacific Northwest, despite a series of late-winter storms.

While this summer generally looks safe, the ISO noted the state could face future shortages if older power plants shut down or reduce their output under new air quality regulations. Many of the power plant projects that were begun during the crisis have since been canceled or postponed because of the poor economy and financial problems facing energy producers.

The ISO recommended that consumers keep their thermostats at 78 degrees when they're home and 85 degrees when they're away, and not use major appliances between noon and 6 p.m., when electricity demand is the highest.

Other tips include keeping the refrigerator full; unplugging second refrigerators; turning off unnecessary lights; resetting pool pumps to run late at night or in the early morning; replacing old, energy inefficient appliances; properly servicing air conditioning units; adding insulation; repairing leaks in air conditioning ductwork; and planting shade trees.

## **News in brief from the San Joaquin Valley**

The Bakersfield Californian

The Associated Press

Thursday April 24, 2003

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) - San Joaquin Valley lawmakers, business leaders and several nonprofit organizations have launched a clean air initiative to target the valley's dirty air.

More than 400 people met in Fresno on Wednesday for the Operation Clean Air summit.

The coalition, which released a 112-page draft plan, aims to create a five-year action plan that will reduce ozone to meet federal health standards under the Clean Air Act and increase economic prosperity from Bakersfield to Stockton. "Economic development is affected directly by the quality of our air," said Mayor Alan Autry, who organized the summit with Fresno County Supervisor Bob Waterson. "We need to clean the air and preserve the economy."

The valley faces stringent deadlines, expensive sanctions and possible loss of federal road-building money if it doesn't come up with a tough cleanup plan.

The Operation Clean Air coalition would like to create an Air Quality Empowerment Zone to be eligible for federal money and tax credits to help businesses build cleaner technology. Business in the empowerment zone may also receive federal funding to help replace old vehicle fleets.

"We're living in a cesspool as far as the air is concerned," said Dr. Leo Shishmanian, a Fresno radiologist, one of about a dozen doctors to attend the air summit.

Some environmental groups criticized Operation Clean Air for not including their organizations.

## Operation Clean Air promising

**Friday, April 25, 2003**

We've got to do something to clean up our air.

Lots of attention already has been devoted to the sorry state of San Joaquin Valley air. It's a problem that has done nothing but get alarmingly worse in the last few years. Air pollution from Stockton to Bakersfield has been so bad that this area has been declared in "severe noncompliance" with the federal Clean Air Act.

Now there's a new effort being launched to help everyone breathe easier. Representatives of nine Valley counties met this week in Fresno and "Operation Clean Air" was the outgrowth of that session.

We're not quite sure what to expect in the months and years to come from this assemblage of about 400 appointed and elected officials and business-industry representatives from Bakersfield to Stockton.

But it's encouraging that so many influential people stand behind a single goal. If they keep up the resolve - perhaps even pressure - good things may be possible.

"Operation Clean Air" is championed by Fresno's high-profile mayor, Alan Autry, and a Fresno County supervisor. One of the group's main tasks is to devise a five-year action plan that will result in cleaner Valley air.



The opinion  
of the Merced  
Sun-Star

The new coalition isn't conflicting with federal Clean Air Act regulations already in place. Its objectives are to expand current efforts to cut pollution from all sources; incentives like tax breaks and development or "empowerment zones" may be offered to advance the project.

One might wonder where the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District figures in all of this or how effective that agency has been in stemming the tide of air pollution. The air district seems to be a player in the Operation Clean Air initiative as it should be and may be quite helpful as the campaign progresses.

It must be remembered, however, that about 57 percent of all Valley air pollution comes from mobile sources like cars, diesel trucks and locomotives, which the local air pollution district has no control over.

That's why we're glad to hear that the Valley air pollution campaign has received support from three area congressmen, including George Radanovich, R-Mariposa, along with Sen. Barbara Boxer.

Tangible assistance from state and federal levels will be needed to advance air pollution elimination in the Valley, particularly regulations to make these aforementioned mobile pollution sources "clean up their act." That means standing up to high-powered resistance from auto, truck and locomotive manufacturers to producing new vehicles that don't pollute the environment.

Two Merced County supervisors and Merced College's president attended the Operation Clean Air session and received assurances from Fresno County Supervisor Bob Waterston that results - and not just empty sentiments - are expected from this long-term endeavor.

We already know what could happen if all that comes from these efforts is meaningless talk. The San Joaquin Valley could lose its essential federal highway funding if air pollution reduction isn't forthcoming.

It's also widely known the Valley's bad air could affect future economic development and aggravate unemployment rates already in the 17 to 20 percent range.

The long-term public health consequences of breathing dirty air also should be a sufficient reason to make "Operation Clean Air" more than just a public relations gesture.

There's a lot riding on our ability to make a significant dent in air pollution and it's heartening to see widespread support for the new initiative.

Now let's make it work!

## Effort to clean Valley's filthy air will take everyone

[Letter to the Editor, Fresno Bee](#)

By Darcy Cain

Fresno

(Published Friday, April 25, 2003, 5:41 AM)

"Clean air may call for crankiness," [the column April 20] by Bill McEwen, hit the need for Operation Clean Air right on. The San Joaquin Valley's air pollution problem is something that can no longer be ignored.

I got sick recently just driving back into the filthy air of the Valley. Why doesn't the fact that we have not near the population of Los Angeles, yet air worse than Los Angeles, bother Valley citizens? It makes one wonder why we don't take pride in our city and start taking part in the effort to clean it up.

Mr. McEwen was right on, though, that more needs to be done than just whining. We need to make direct and clear goals and resolutions that we must get the city to enforce. Cleaning the Valley air will take more than just a few environmentalists. This is a citywide effort that we need to get everyone involved in.