

KRCD to build pair of 'peaker' power plants

By Hanford Sentinel Staff, January 9, 2003

The Kings River Conservation District plans to construct two gas-fired "peaker" plants that will help overcome power supply constraints that threaten power reliability in the central San Joaquin Valley.

On Dec. 31, KRCD and the California Department of Water Resources signed a power purchase agreement for the two plants. They will have a combined output of 90 megawatts, which is enough to serve some 90,000 homes. They will be used to provide energy when it is needed most - the hottest and coldest days of the year.

KRCD said it hopes to have the plants in operation by the fall of 2004.

"These projects will improve energy reliability and stability to the customer and the system," KRCD General Manager David Orth said in a news release.

Under a recent settlement with Williams Energy, the state of California has received six gas-fired, turbine-generator sets.

The state will provide two of the units to KRCD at no cost.

KRCD will obtain all permits, finance, construct and operate the generation plants.

The agreement will cover 10 years. During that time, the DWR will acquire all energy produced by the plants and pay all costs as long as KRCD meets strict plant availability requirements.

"We are very pleased the state sees KRCD as an agency that can support the energy needs of the Fresno service area," Orth said. "KRCD has a record of energy generation success that spans nearly two decades at our Pine Flat Power Plant."

Detailed planning and permitting work will begin immediately, KRCD reported.

Dooley sworn in for seventh term

By Hanford Sentinel Staff, January 9, 2003

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Rep. Cal Dooley, D-Fresno, on Tuesday took the oath of office as he was sworn in for his seventh term in the United States House of Representatives.

Dooley represents the 20th Congressional District, which includes all of Kings County.

"The people from the Central Valley have entrusted me with a very important job and one that I take very seriously," said Dooley. "I will continue to work day and night to address the issues that are important to our Valley residents."

Dooley said his priorities for the 108th Congress include:

€ Tackling the severe air pollution problem in the Central Valley;

€ Continuing to get federal support for local crime-fighting and drug-eradication efforts;

€ Helping to grow the economy and providing for more, and better, jobs in the Valley.

Hanford native Dooley is a fourth generation San Joaquin Valley farmer and will continue to serve on the House of Representatives' Committees on Agriculture and Resources. He attended public schools in Hanford, graduating from Hanford High School in 1972.

Dooley earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics in 1977 from the University of California at Davis. In 1987, as a Sloan Fellow, Dooley earned a master's in management from Stanford University.

Dooley and his wife, Linda, have two daughters, Brooke and Emily.

[Fresno Bee Editorial, January 9, 2003](#)

No new fireplaces

Fresno City Council is correct to pursue a ban in new homes.

The Fresno City Council took a first small step on Tuesday toward addressing the foul air that plagues this Valley. The council voted to move ahead with an ordinance banning wood-burning fireplaces in new homes built in the city. It could take effect as soon as March.

It should. Critics complained that the council is needlessly duplicating efforts by the regional air quality district to enact the same sort of rule, arguing that the city should wait to see what the air district does and then enact stricter regulations if need be. But that criticism ignores two important points: There is no guarantee the air district will come up with the sort of rule the council contemplates. And why shouldn't the city of Fresno lead the way for the air district -- and other Valley cities -- instead of the other way around?

This is no small matter. About 30% of the soot and ash that blankets Valley cities in the winter comes from burning wood in residential fireplaces. Halting the practice in new homes is a good first step toward eliminating it entirely.

Cynthia Sterling, one of three new council members, along with Mike Dages and Henry T. Perea, raised the issue of older homes with their wood-burning fireplaces -- some of which have no alternative for winter heating. Such homes would not be affected by the proposed ordinance, but they are a problem that will have to be addressed eventually. Some sort of retrofit program or breaks on heating bills will be needed, and that will cost money.

But many of the steps we must now take to clean up the Valley's filthy air will be costly. Others may not require much money to implement, but will cut against the grain of long habit -- such as burning wood in fireplaces solely for the aesthetic joy it brings. Those sacrifices will hurt, too.

The alternative, however, is simply unacceptable. We can take these steps, and make these sacrifices, or we can continue to live in an atmospheric cesspool. Air pollution is increasingly deadly to crops on the Valley floor, trees in the Sierra Nevada and the children so close to our hearts.

With those stakes on the table, we can't afford to stand pat.

[Merced Sun-Star Editorial, January 9, 2003](#)

Air pollution fight gains another ally

Our readers don't need us to tell them that the air in the San Joaquin Valley is perhaps the dirtiest in the nation. They — and their doctors — already painfully understand that breathing here is downright dangerous.

We've been squawking in this space for more than a year about air quality, and there hasn't been much response from the elected officials and bureaucrats. Just a drib here and a drab there. All the while, the air just grows worse, and worse, and worse.

That collective silence may be coming to an end, thankfully.

John Burton, state Senate president pro tempore, has created the Senate Select Committee on Air Quality in the Central Valley. On Monday, he appointed state Sen. Dean Florez of Kern County to chair the committee.

It was Florez who asked Burton to set up the committee, and he deserves the credit for putting his political capital on the line. It's possible, we hear, that our own state senator, Jeff Denham, may have a seat on the committee. Denham is an agricultural businessman, and we think he would be able to add a valuable perspective to the discussion.

That said, tackling the thorny air pollution problem is not going to be a simple task, and Florez has admitted as much. In an interview, Florez said that the committee will "... be the venue to start challenging some of the long-held assumptions about what's causing our air problem and how we can start to fix it. We might make a lot of people mad, but we've got to do something."

Florez said he will draft legislation that would impose limits on open-field burning, deal with fireplaces and impose tighter air pollution controls at dairies. "I don't mean just a report in January," he said.

What a breath of fresh air from a politician. Here's somebody — finally — who is willing to use political clout to shine a light into the dark closets of the air issue. We hope he can clean out a lot of skeletons.

And that got us thinking: Where were the politicians years ago, before all of today's problems? They were nowhere to be found.

First, environmentalists got involved. They did research. They complained and made a lot of noise about the problems.

Next, the press, this newspaper included, brought the issue into the region's living rooms.

And now, finally, the politicians are falling into line. Where were they all these years when the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District was missing deadlines?

As a result of the district's ineptitude, the Valley faces deadlines to reduce smog or face sanctions that include millions of dollars in fines, business penalties and the delay of \$2 billion in road-building funds. These are serious problems, indeed. If the issue had been tackled years ago, we wouldn't be in such a bind today.

Last year, Merced was mentioned on the national news wire in a story about the American Lung Association's ratings for smog throughout the United States. The city had the seventh-highest smog rate in the nation from 1998 to 2000. Merced County ranked ninth.

It's time to clean the air, once and for all. We wish Florez nothing but the best as he tackles the air issue. He deserves all of our support.

[Letter to the Editor, Fresno Bee, January 9, 2003](#)

Bad bus idea

By Jon Fernandez
Clovis

Brent Jorgensen's "solution" for cleaner air in the Valley (letter Jan. 4) is myopic and way off-base. Eliminating the bus services in Fresno would not help reduce air pollution. What it would do is strand the thousands without a car and the elderly and handicapped who are unable to drive to work, the grocery store and the doctor's office, and leave hundreds of transit workers unemployed.

FAX buses are either diesel-powered or clean-air vehicles, and I'll wager Mr. Jorgensen drives a gasoline-powered vehicle that pollutes our air worse than any bus. Public transportation is not only an integral part of a city's infrastructure; it is a method of reducing air pollution.

I have a better idea to help reduce air pollution: Use the bus, carpool or ride a bike whenever possible. Get rid of those red lights on the freeway onramps; they not only contribute to the air pollution, they prevent most vehicles from reaching freeway speed by the time they merge into traffic. The technical term for a freeway onramp is an acceleration lane. We don't all drive Ferraris.

[Letters to the Editor, The Bakersfield Californian, January 9, 2003](#)

Reduce fuel usage

We are aware that operating fossil fueled engines consume oxygen from our air and exhaust emissions that are detrimental.

Consider the SUV with an efficiency of 10 miles/gallon versus a compact with 20 miles/gallon efficiency. The SUV driver travels 10 miles/day and burns 1 gallon; compact driving travels 20 miles/day and burns 1 gallon. The key is that air is polluted by burning of fuel; and style/type of vehicle is irrelevant but driving efficiency is important.

Fueled engines compete with people for breaths of air. If one considers human respiration rate/lung capacity versus engine RPM/DISPL/H.P., the ratio arrived at is 4. Thus the 1.0 HP lawn mower consumes air equivalent to that required by four persons.

A 100 HP auto uses air required by 400 people. If one considers aircraft/ships, etc., the competition becomes frightening.

Would it not be a neat Lenten/New Year's resolution for each of us to voluntarily reduce our personal fuel and (food) consumption -- by whatever means -- by 10 percent and hopefully reduce our air quality from unhealthy to moderate to good.

JACK M. RADEMACHER, Bakersfield