

Fresnans to give earful on environment policy

By John Ellis

Thursday, Sept. 16, 2004, The Fresno Bee

The California Performance Review Commission is coming to Fresno on Friday to hold a hearing on how the state government might change the way it conserves resources and protects the environment.

The commission is likely to get an earful of criticism.

There will even be some common ground among environmental and agricultural groups -- which many times don't agree -- that the California Performance Review's proposals go too far in reforming state government.

"The biggest one generating concern is the air resources board," said Manuel Cunha, president of the Fresno-based Nisei Farmers League. "I personally believe, and other ag groups do, too, that it needs to stay."

Among the proposals is folding the California Air Resources Board into a proposed environmental department. That and other proposals have also caught the eye of the Los Angeles-area based Network for Environmental Communication, which said the California Performance Review would "greatly reduce staffing and public access to government by consolidating key environmental agencies into a bigger, centralized bureaucracy."

These and other groups plan to make their voices heard during a public comment session Friday afternoon.

Fresno's meeting is the sixth of seven public hearings on recommendations in the California Performance Review report. The aim of the 2,504-page report -- a centerpiece of Gov. Schwarzenegger's administration -- is to reinvent state government.

Schwarzenegger created a 275-member team of state workers that looked at the state government's structure over a six-month period. It came up with hundreds of recommendations.

Among them: Merging 11 agencies and 79 departments into fewer than a dozen departments; eliminating 118 of California's 339 boards and commissions; eliminating county school boards; and pushing forward the last day when students are eligible to start kindergarten.

Friday's focus, however, will be on the environment and resources.

Environmental organizations such as the Natural Resources Defense Council, the California League of Conservation Voters, Coalition for Clean Air, Sierra Club California and the Nature Conservancy will be present. Agricultural organizations such as the California Farm Bureau and Fresno County Farm Bureau also will be present.

Jay Watson of the Wilderness Society will testify on separating fire-protection functions of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and placing them in a new Department of Public Safety and Homeland Security.

The Wilderness Society, he said, "vigorously opposes the proposed restructuring" because "it is poor public policy to wall off fire protection from forest management."

The Nisei Farmers' Cunha favors keeping the state water quality control board, but not the regional water quality control boards.

The California Performance Review proposes merging the Water Resources Control Board into a division of water policy with nine regional offices instead of nine regional boards.

Global warming report iced, expert tells panel

The White House is trying to bury the document calling for action, Arctic leader says.

By JOAN LOWY

Scripps Howard News Service

[Thursday, September 16, 2004, Orange County Register](#)

WASHINGTON - The Bush administration is trying to bury an international report that contains recommendations on addressing the dramatic impacts of global warming on the people of the Arctic, an Arctic leader told a Senate panel Wednesday.

State Department officials are blocking the release of one of two reports that were to be presented to government ministers from eight Arctic nations at a meeting Nov. 9 in Reykjavik, Iceland, Sheila Watt-Cloutier of northern Quebec in Canada told the Senate Commerce Committee. She chairs the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, which represents native people of the region.

Four years ago, the United States and other nations launched the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, the most comprehensive regional look at the impacts of global warming ever undertaken. More than 300 scientists participated in the project.

The results are contained in two reports - a scientific analysis and another report outlining policy recommendations - that were to be presented at the November meeting, Watt-Cloutier said.

The science report will still be presented, but the United States has blocked the release of the policy report at the meeting and is attempting to bury its recommendations in a "bureaucratic" report that will be sent to the governments of the countries involved at a later date, Watt-Cloutier said.

The policy report notes that the Arctic region is especially susceptible to the impacts of global warming and that there is a limit to how much the people there can adapt to the changing climate, said Terry Fenge, a Canadian representative to the circumpolar conference.

The policy document urges a reduction in the heat-trapping greenhouse-gas emissions that are fueling climate change, he said.

"It's politics," Watt-Cloutier said.

If the United States were to accept and follow the recommendations, then it "would have to change U.S. policy. They would have to sign the Kyoto Protocol and the rest of it. It's short-term thinking pressured by (industry)."

The other nations participating in the climate assessment - Canada, Russia, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Sweden - want the policy recommendations released but are being overruled by the U.S., Watt-Cloutier said.

Scientific studies show that the effects of climate change have been especially powerful in the Arctic and are having a devastating effect on the region's wildlife and native people, who rely on hunting and fishing to survive.

One of the scientific assessment's conclusions is that many of the region's species that depend on sea ice - such as polar bears, seals, walrus and some birds - will decline and may become extinct as the result of climate change, Watt-Cloutier said.

"We find ourselves at the very cusp of a defining moment in the history of the planet," she said.

"The Earth is melting and we must all come together to do the right thing to address climate change."

Shell takes hard line on sale

Refusal to include pipelines, other key refinery items could be seen as bad faith

By ERIN WALDNER, Californian staff writer

[Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Sept. 16, 2004](#)

Shell Oil Co. wants to sell its Bakersfield refinery without the vital pipelines, onsite oil storage tanks and other equipment needed to run it, sources familiar with the situation say.

The company's refusal to include key parts in a deal could dissuade buyers from purchasing the Shell Bakersfield Refinery, which produces 2 percent of California's gasoline and 6 percent of its diesel.

The proposed restrictions could also be seen as a violation of an agreement Shell President Lynn Lavery Elsenhans made with state Attorney General Bill Lockyer to put forth a good-faith effort to find a buyer for the refinery.

Shell announced in November it would close the 72-year-old refinery on Oct. 1 because of declining crude supplies in the San Joaquin Valley.

After state officials complained that doing so would squeeze supplies and drive up fuel prices, Lockyer secured a commitment from Shell to postpone the shutdown until at least the end of the year -- and possibly until March -- to allow time to negotiate a sale.

"Shell committed to the state of California that it would make a good-faith effort to find a potential, qualified buyer and complete a sales transaction," said Lockyer spokesman Tom Dresslar. "We'll explore our options if we believe Shell is not acting in good faith."

Lockyer and the Federal Trade Commission are investigating whether a shutdown would violate antitrust laws.

Shell spokesman Stan Mays would not say whether Shell is trying to hold onto pieces of the refinery. He would only say that "several parties have expressed an interest in purchasing the facility and are participating in a bidding process based on the terms and conditions proposed by Shell."

Mays said he could not discuss any details of the bidding process because of confidentiality agreements between Shell and the bidders.

Shell set Sept. 15 as the deadline to bid on the refinery, according to published reports.

Mays said he could not confirm that date, only that Shell is in the middle of the process.

Under public and political pressure, Shell recently agreed to postpone the closure until at least the end of the year -- and possibly longer -- to give the refinery time to sell.

Meanwhile, about 150 refinery workers will meet today and next Thursday to vote on a contract between Shell and the employees' union, according to Ed Huhn, the group's secretary-treasurer.

Huhn said the plan calls for most employees who were planning to retire or transfer to stay on at the refinery until it closes or sells.

In return, the company will compensate employees.

As for employees who have accepted transfers to other Shell sites, Huhn said they would still be covered by the contract, so they could still relocate after the refinery is closed or sold.

Employee response to Shell's decision to delay the refinery's closure is "all over the ballpark," Huhn said. Some are happy about the delay. Others, particularly those who were planning to move in October, are not.

Huhn said he has heard several companies are interested in purchasing the refinery.

"They (Shell) won't tell us who," he said.

One name that's been mentioned is Tesoro Petroleum Corp.

The San Antonio company operates six refineries in Washington, Alaska, Hawaii, North Dakota, Utah and Martinez in Northern California, where Shell also operates a refinery.

A Tesoro spokeswoman said she could not comment on whether the company is interested in purchasing the refinery.

Another possible buyer that's been mentioned is Sinclair Oil Corp. in Salt Lake City.

A vice president at Sinclair, Kevin Brown, said he couldn't comment on whether the company was pursuing acquisition of the refinery.

"In general, we would find it difficult to make an investment in a California refinery," Brown said.

A third company seen as a possible, if unlikely, buyer is Premcor Inc. in Connecticut. Premcor owns four refineries in the United States, including one in Delaware it acquired in May.

A spokeswoman for Premcor did not return calls seeking comment.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Hong Kong Gasps As Air Pollution Reaches Record Level

[Tuesday, Sept. 14, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL](#)

HONG KONG (AP)--Thick smog shrouded Hong Kong on Tuesday, pushing air pollution near the airport to an all-time high for the territory, environmental officials said.

The level climbed above 200 on the Hong Kong Air Pollution Index for the first time, peaking with an afternoon reading of 201 in part of outlying Lantau Island, the Environmental Protection Department said.

Hong Kong's previous record of 197 was recorded on June 9, said department spokeswoman Natalia Leung.

The government warned the public to reduce physical exertion and outdoor activities in the highly polluted area. Readings between 100 and 200, which are common, prompt such warnings for people with heart and respiratory problems.

Other parts of Hong Kong had far lower pollution levels Tuesday. Leung said she wasn't immediately sure what had caused the high reading.

Hong Kong is frequently obscured by pollution, and a government environmental official recently acknowledged that about 80% of it blows in from mainland China.

Officials in Hong Kong and China's neighboring Guangdong province say they are working on a cleanup plan.

'Cool gray city' projected to turn murderously hot

Temperatures likely to rise by mid-century as a result of global warming, study warns

By Carl T. Hall, science writer

[September 14, 2004, San Francisco Chronicle](#)

San Francisco's trademark cool summers are likely to heat up dramatically before the century is over, scientists said Monday, bringing frequent heat waves and a big jump in heat-related deaths.

A new city-by-city analysis of California climate projections suggests that everybody's favorite "cool gray city of love" may be in for a shock from the local impact of global climate change.

Critics, however, said that such doomsday global-warming scenarios were highly speculative -- designed mostly to sway public opinion and influence policy-makers considering proposals to cut heat-trapping vehicle emissions.

The latest projections by the Union of Concerned Scientists in Washington, D.C., suggest that in a worst-case scenario, San Francisco can expect 55 heat-wave days -- three or more consecutive days of temperatures above 79 degrees -- a year by the 2050s and up to 135 such days a year by the 2090s, compared with only 10 to 15 heat-wave days in the 1990s.

These higher temperatures will translate into more deaths among old people, infants and people with heat-sensitive medical conditions, the authors said. By this reckoning, San Francisco would

wind up experiencing at least 1, 300 and up to as many as 4,500 more heat-related deaths in the decade of the 2090s -- or three to 10 times as many as occurred in the 1990s.

Interviewed on a typically balmy afternoon in San Francisco, study co- author Susanne C. Moser said that because of the influence of cooling ocean breezes, the city's increasingly frequent heat waves were more likely than in other places to start and stop abruptly.

The scenario suggests San Francisco will be transformed into something akin to an oven inside a deep freeze whose door keeps swinging open and shut.

"You'll get a lot of temperature variation, heat waves alternating with rapid cooling," said Moser, a staff scientist with the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo. "That's a situation the body won't get used to."

She said this was one of many projected harmful impacts of climate change that might be avoided, or at least reduced, if steps were taken now to cut the amount of greenhouse gases polluting the atmosphere.

The best- and worst-case scenarios in the report reflect different assumptions on how much the release of such gases is cut back in coming years. One scenario assumes continued reliance on burning fossil fuels and rapid increase in heat-trapping gases all this century; the other assumes a transition to cleaner energy sources, which would allow greenhouse gas emissions to peak at mid-century, then taper back to current levels by 2100.

The report calls for "aggressive vehicle global warming standards" and was issued in advance of a key meeting of the California Air Resources Board on Sept. 23 in Los Angeles. The board plans to vote on proposed rules forcing automakers to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions at least 25 percent by 2016. The proposal would take effect with the 2009 model year.

The Union of Concerned Scientists issued a broader report last month on California's changing climate that was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. That report was intended to draw out the regional implications of the latest world climate-change models.

The report released Monday by the influential scientific advocacy group adds new numbers that zero in on the state's key urban centers -- San Francisco, Sacramento, Fresno, Los Angeles and Riverside-San Bernardino.

Overall temperature averages in California are projected to rise at least 2 degrees Fahrenheit and as much as 5.5 degrees by mid-century, depending on the volume of heat-trapping gases through the 2050s. By the end of the century, the projections call for temperatures up to 10.5 degrees warmer.

If that's the case, "a summer day in San Francisco could feel like a summer day in Tijuana today," the study's authors wrote in a summary of their latest findings.

"Of the five cities, San Francisco appears most susceptible to rising heat," the new report concluded.

Fresno, already a pressure-cooker compared with most Bay Area locations, emerged as the city least susceptible to the anticipated higher temperatures, on the theory that residents in Fresno are used to sweltering and know how to cope.

"People can get used to persistent heat," Moser said.

Moser said the estimates were based on conservative temperature projections and did not include the effect of population growth, which she said would be certain to make the figures look even worse if they were built into the equation.

Some experts maintain there's no need for draconian steps -- which might bring their own harmful impacts on the economy and public health.

Carmakers are expected to challenge the state's authority to implement rules reducing greenhouse gases. An industry spokesman, Eron Shosteck, director of communications for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers in Washington, said the group was analyzing the "technical

feasibility, economic impacts and cost-effectiveness" of the standards, as well as federal pre-emption.

Ron DeFore, representing the Sport Utility Vehicle Owners of America, said the new standards inevitably would lead to smaller and more expensive cars, and he cited studies suggesting each 1,000-pound drop in average vehicle weight brought at least 2,000 more road deaths per year.

He said the proposed state standards would add at least \$5,000 to the sticker price of the average new car -- far more than what he said consumers would be willing to pay, even after they take anticipated fuel savings into account.

"All of the climate projections showing negative human health outcomes are based on computer models -- climate-change models predicting what's going to happen 100 years from now," DeFore said. "Why wouldn't you also want to look at history, and credible studies that are not projections but have looked at known outcomes, and at least weigh the sides together?"

California cities heating up

A new set of global-warming projections for five California urban areas suggests San Francisco, long used to cool summers, may have to adjust to more frequent heat waves and the ensuing increase in heat-related illnesses and deaths. Here are detailed projections for the 2050s and 2090s under two scenarios: "Lower emissions" assumes less heat-trapping gases and less warming, while the "higher emissions" scenario assumes more emissions and warmer temperatures.

Home buyers should do due diligence about ag

[Visalia Times-Delta, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, Sept. 16, 2004](#)

My comments pertain to the decision of Tulare County Planning Commission to approve the proposed 5,000-plus-cow Mineral King Dairy north of Visalia and the subsequent fallout:

My wife and I recently bought a home in Shannon Ranch. Before we decided to commit to this purchase, we carefully read the Covenant & Restrictions that was given to us by Centex Homes (I am going on the assumption everyone who bought here also received this). It clearly stated that (paraphrased here): Ag is a part of the area, and there definitely could be "smells" and other externalities from this mainstay of Tulare County life. It was there, in plain black and white along with such things as we couldn't hang our clothes on the fence or have a video arcade in the garage (or something to that effect).

That being said, to those who move here from larger metropolitan areas (read: SoCal, NorCal) or move from inner areas of Visalia to newer developments that encroach on agricultural lands -- here's some unsolicited advice: Do your due diligence before you make the decision to buy a home. Don't just look at the floor plan and closet space. Look around the area. What could/may occur in the area over the life of your investment? Is it zoned for a specific purpose? When we bought we felt that the possibility of agricultural developments expanding or remaining the same was high, more housing taking the place of the surrounding farmland higher, and a new professional sporting venue being built, low.

Farmers were here long before you came, and they have a right to pursue free enterprise in areas that are zoned for agriculture (In this case, the Tulare County "Animal Confinement Facilities Plan").

I really feel those fighting this after the fact are being unfair to the farmer and trying to use government's power to compensate for their own lack of foresight and research into their home-buying decision in the area. Simply put: tough. Besides, if you talk to a dairyman, all that really is is the "smell of money."

DON MAHON, Visalia

Concerns expressed about dairies

Industry adds to air problems

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, Sept. 16, 2004](#)

I would like to be allowed to add to the mix regarding the dairy industry and the mind meld of our Board of Supervisors regarding them. A few well known facts should be addressed here before they go off the deep end.

First, is the fact that the town of Chino has given the dairies operating there the bum's rush -- air quality and a 45 percent water pollution problem. Chino want its land and water back.

Second, the dairies have spotted cheap land in Kern County, waffling county politicians and enough water to meet their needs. The only deadly problem here is the proven fact that our air has been rated as polluted to extreme status. And also the fact that our underground water supply is being taken for a ride by spreading LA's "fecal matter" all over our open farm lands. The dairy industry will add to the whole enchilada.

Where do we find a group of honest county supervisors to defend the citizens of this town? Certainly not in this town! It would appear that some serious money has changed hands regarding this blunder!

It will only be a matter of time when Bakersfield becomes another Chino. Are we willing to stand for that? Unless we take a stand now, it's going to happen.

-- DARREL SOMERS, Bakersfield

Worries about air, water

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, Sept. 16, 2004](#)

Regarding recent *Californian* editorials, "Shame on everybody" and "Public must be the client," I wish to thank the newspaper for keeping the public informed on all local and community affairs -- good and bad. Without you where would we be?

Regarding these editorials, dairy dung and human dung are being dumped on top of all of us. The very locations they are throwing it on is in the middle of our water storage areas.

No one has mentioned that our winds and breezes flow from the northwest. Not only will our water be polluted, but the very air we breathe comes from northwest winds.

Which is more important to our governing body -- special interest monies or the health and welfare of we the people? How many more chemicals can we put in our drinking water? What about chemical reactions?

Please let us put an immediate stop to this filthy dumping of cow dung and human dung in our air and on our dinner tables.

Thank you, *Californian* for your brilliant insights of all the wrongdoings in our communities.

-- JUANITA ELLIS, Bakersfield