

Air quality battle brewing

Today's public forum to address possible fees on development pollution.

By Mark Grossi

[Fresno Bee and Modesto Bee, Thursday, June 30, 2005](#)

The building industry and environmentalists are expected to face off today about a rule aimed at controlling air pollution from sprawling housing and business developments.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will hold a public workshop today on the rule, which would levy fees for uncontrolled air pollution resulting from new homes, strip malls and other projects. The 1:30 p.m. workshop will be at the air pollution office, 1990 E. Gettysburg Ave., Fresno.

Such developments create pollution indirectly by raising traffic levels and other activities, such as landscape maintenance. Motorists in the Valley, one of the country's dirtiest air basins, already drive 94 million miles daily.

Environmentalists are expected to argue the rule does not go far enough in requiring pollution reductions. Builders have pressed the district for a clear description of how developments can be connected to air pollution.

The rule would apply to developments of varying sizes, such as 50 or more residential units, 2,000 square feet of commercial space and 25,000 square feet of industrial or educational space.

Using a complex mathematical model, the district will determine how much pollution will be created over the next decade with each project.

Developers will get credit for measures to reduce pollution, such as building near or providing bus stops. If the district determines that too much pollution remains, fees will be charged for each ton of excess emissions. The fees in 2006 will be \$4,650 for each excess ton of oxides of nitrogen. For particle pollution, the fee is \$2,907 per ton. The fee increases each year thereafter.

The money will be used in pollution-reduction efforts, such as replacing transit buses with clean-fuel vehicles.

Air panel hikes estimate on cows

By Carol Reiter

[Merced Sun-Star, Thursday, June 30, 2005](#)

What's up with cows and their "emissions?"

That's what farmers and air pollution experts are trying to figure out.

Recent studies have shown cows emit less smog-producing gasses than originally thought. But as of Wednesday, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District wants to up those gassy estimates.

That's got some people in the agriculture industry crying foul.

"It seems like they picked a number from a hat," said Diana Westmoreland Pedrozo, executive director of the Merced County Farm Bureau.

If the proposed emission numbers are adopted, that would make dairy cows the biggest polluters in the state, above cars, trucks, aircraft, and oil and gas production. The proposal also means dairies could face higher fees or even fines if they are considered polluters.

However, Westmoreland Pedrozo said the dairy industry has been working to follow all the state's regulations and does what it can to reduce air pollution.

"We have the same amount of cows every year," she said. "They don't change from day to day -- why does our air pollution change?"

"Dairies are an easy target. In reality, people are the biggest polluters. What happened when they got rid of ag land in Los Angeles? Did the air get better?"

The air district said its new estimates are conservative and changeable. There's a public hearing planned for 1:30 p.m. July 11 at the district's Fresno office to take input from anyone who wants to speak about

the proposed change in standards. A teleconference with the district's regional offices in Modesto and Bakersfield will offer more opportunities for people to give feedback.

A spokesman for Community Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship, an organization that wants to ensure the environmental viability of the California dairy industry, said the proposal is political, not scientific.

"The district has ignored its own studies -- funded, designed and overseen by California regulators," said Michael Boccadoro.

The air district disagrees.

"The numbers we came up with were based on a review of 15 scientific studies," said Jaime Holt, the district's information administrator.

The air district now estimates each of the Valley's 2.5 million dairy cows emits 12.8 pounds of volatile organic compounds every year. Volatile organic compounds are nonmethane gasses that produce ozone.

But the newest proposal calls for setting the cows' emissions at 20.6 pounds for each animal.

Dairies must have permits from the air resources board to operate, and if the increased estimates are adopted, it could mean higher permitting fees for dairy owners.

"They can fee us out of business," Westmoreland Pedrozo said.

A recent study, funded in part by the district and performed by researchers at the University of California, Davis, says cows produce about 6.4 pounds of emissions per year.

By Aug. 1, the air district is required to adopt a realistic number to reflect the contribution of emissions from Central Valley cows to the air basin -- one of the smoggiest places in the country.

The emission standards will lay the foundation for determining how to approach dairy regulation.

"We realize that there is still work to be done with this emission factor," Holt said. "This is just the beginning of the process."

Fresno City College building cited again

State safety inspectors' fines at Math-Science Building total \$2,340.

By Jim Steinberg

[Fresno Bee, Thursday, June 30, 2005](#)

State workplace safety inspectors have again cited State Center Community College District after finding more substandard conditions at the Fresno City College Math-Science Building.

Less than 24 hours after trustees commended the district's progress in correcting safety deficiencies in the building, the district received notice from the state Wednesday of additional infractions and fines totaling \$2,340.

The state Division of Occupational Safety and Health issued four new citations for violations that it said its inspectors observed on May 23 and 24. Those dates came just days after the district turned away OSHA inspectors trying to enter the Math-Science Building.

At the time, the district explained its refusal to allow OSHA inspectors to enter as a result of litigation with OSHA and arbitration with the State Center Federation of Teachers.

OSHA subsequently obtained a subpoena demanding entrance. OSHA spokeswoman Dean Fryer said Wednesday that the latest findings are "totally new citations and fines. This began in May when we were denied access."

Yet Fryer said the district "appears to have done an about-face," and that it now cooperates with OSHA on correcting safety problems in the Math-Science Building.

The original \$20,100 in fines penalized the district mainly for inadequate ventilation and exposure of students, faculty and staff to formaldehyde.

The new citations identify:

Failure to provide training for workers who came in contact with asbestos or material containing asbestos in an area above the biology department.

Failure to provide adequate headroom in the Forum Hall office area. Regulations require 7 feet from floor to ceiling, and the space measured 6 feet 8 inches.

Failure to notify employees within 15 days of formaldehyde monitoring results.

Failure to mount, locate and identify portable fire extinguishers.

District Chancellor Tom Crow and federation President Zwi Reznik said in separate interviews that the latest infractions are minor compared with problems addressed in May.

The fire extinguishers have been fixed, Crow said. People have been moved out of the area with inadequate head space. And training is planned for workers who come near asbestos or materials containing it.

"We met today with OSHA," Crow said. "We are not going to be contesting this. Most of the work is completed."

District President Patrick E. Patterson restated State Center's intention to comply with all regulations and assure a safe environment for all who enter its buildings.

"I want the people to know that we are trying to do everything humanly possible," Patterson said. "We want the building to be safe, and we want people to feel safe."

Reznik said, "The district still has problems it has to address. At this point, the district is headed in the right direction, but we will keep watching."

Pesticide drift bill

[Modesto Bee, Dollars and Sense, Thursday, June 30, 2005](#)

A bill that would speed up investigations into pesticide drift incidents and increase fines for those responsible was set for its first Assembly hearing Wednesday. Farm workers who have been poisoned by chemicals drifting from fields are coming out in support of the Pesticide Safety Enforcement Act. Farmworkers and clean air advocates said most pesticide drift investigations result in little more than a warning. The language in Senate Bill 879 calls for pesticide drift investigations to be completed in two months unless the state explains the delay. It would also make fines mandatory when a pesticide violation threatens someone's health.

EPA Proposes Stationary Diesel Fumes Cut

By JOHN HEILPRIN, Associated Press Writer

[In the San Francisco Chronicle, Thursday, June 30, 2005](#)

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The Environmental Protection Agency is proposing cutting pollution by as much as 90 percent from electrical generators, compressors, agricultural pumps and other equipment powered by stationary diesel engines.

The agency's proposal, which it planned to announce Thursday, would require companies to produce cleaner-burning diesel engines for use in such equipment starting in 2007. Engine owners would be expected to use diesel fuel that contains no more than 500 parts per million of sulfur starting that year, then switch again to fuel with no more than 15 ppm of sulfur in 2011, The Associated Press has learned.

Currently, some types of diesel fuel used in off-road vehicles and some stationary equipment can contain up to 5,000 ppm of sulfur.

Agency officials declined to comment before the proposal was signed Wednesday to satisfy a court agreement with New York-based advocacy group Environmental Defense. The group's 2003 federal suit in California argued the federal standards were long overdue.

"Reducing the pollution from diesel exhaust is one of the single most important steps that can be taken to protect human health from harmful air pollution," said Jana Milford, a senior scientist with Environmental Defense.

Her group's statement said the proposal would close "a critical gap," because existing stationary diesel engines discharge pollution at levels 10 to 20 times those that national emission standards would allow for their mobile counterparts.

A similar rule issued last year was intended to cut pollution by more than 90 percent from off-road vehicles and equipment such as forklifts, tractors and tugboats.

The new proposal "is really the continuation of applying the clean diesel system to all categories of diesel machines and vehicles," said Bill Buff, spokesman for the Diesel Technology Forum, an industry group for engine makers, refiners and manufacturers of pollution-control devices.

"It started with trucks and buses, which in January 2007 are going to be 98 percent cleaner than back in the late '80s."

About 100,000 new stationary diesel engines made each year would be affected by the new proposal. An estimated 600,000 stationary diesel engines are now being used, more than half of them for electrical generators.

The rule is intended to cut tens of thousands of tons of smog-forming chemicals, fine particles and soot annually, which are blamed each year for increases in respiratory illnesses and thousands of premature deaths. Children, the elderly and people suffering from asthma are considered especially vulnerable.

A big exception was made for diesel engines in emergency backup generators used by apartment and commercial buildings, hotels, banks and other businesses concerned about power outages, said Mark MacLeod, Environmental Defense's director of special projects.

Those engines are typically used only a couple of hours a month to make sure they still operate reliably, he said.

Several states, including Texas and California, previously adopted emission standards for stationary engines. The Senate voted last week to provide a \$1 billion fund for grants and loans to cut pollution from existing diesel engines.

On the Net:

Environmental Protection Agency:

Environmental Defense:

<http://www.epa.gov> <<http://www.epa.gov>>

<http://www.environmentaldefense.org> <<http://www.environmentaldefense.org>>

<http://www.environmentaldefense.org>

Wildfires increased carbon monoxide

By LEE BOWMAN , Scripps Howard News Service

[In the O.C. Register, Thursday, June 30, 2005](#)

Wildfires that burned more than 11 million acres of Alaska and Canada last summer put about as much carbon monoxide into the atmosphere as did tailpipes and smokestacks in the United States during the same period, according to a new study.

Researchers from the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo., used a combination of airborne and satellite instruments, computer models and numerical techniques that allowed them to sort out carbon monoxide coming from the wildfires and other sources.

Wildfires in Alaska, British Columbia and the Yukon were particularly intense last summer, one of the warmest and driest on record, with most of the fires sparked by thousands of "dry" lightning strikes from thunderstorms that yielded little rain.

The team concluded that in charring an area roughly the size of Maryland and Connecticut combined, the fires released about 33 million tons of carbon monoxide from June through August. And because of the wildfires, ground-level concentrations of ozone increased by 25 percent or more in parts of the northern United States and by 10 percent as far away as Europe.

With continuing dry conditions in much of Alaska and the western states, this year's fire season is again off to a dangerous start, with more than 1.6 million acres burned thus far in 2005, including several hundred thousand in Alaska, according to the National Fire Information Center.

"It is important to see how the influence of these fires can reach large parts of the atmosphere, perhaps even over the entire Northern Hemisphere," said Gabriele Pfister, a scientist at the center and lead author of the study, published in the June issue of Geophysical Research Letters. "This has significant implications as societies take steps to improve air quality."

Carbon monoxide is a toxic gas that can affect human health even at low levels. It is emitted from combustion of any carbon-containing fuels that don't completely burn.

Ground-level ozone is formed by reactions between carbon monoxide and other pollutants and sunlight. Ozone irritates the respiratory system and may increase heart attack risk. It can damage the growth of plants and have long-term climate effects.

Although the EPA monitors both pollutants, scientists have been unable to determine the regional sources of emissions or the extent to which human and natural activities contribute to concentrations in the air.

For their study, which was funded by NASA and the National Science Foundation, the NCAR team relied on a remote pollution-sensing instrument mounted on NASA's Terra environmental satellite to quantify emissions from the fires. They then used models to simulate transport of the pollutants and the resulting production of ozone downwind.

Governor's workforce is growing again

Despite his talk of curbing spending, state set to add 11,000 jobs over 2 years

Todd Wallack, Staff Writer

[San Francisco Chronicle, Thursday, June 30, 2005](#)

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is looking for a few good workers. A few thousand.

Despite his stump speeches about curbing government spending, the state has added 4,983 full-time government jobs this fiscal year.

And the Schwarzenegger administration proposes creating 6,288 jobs in the fiscal year that starts Friday, adding up to a net gain of more than 11,000 full-time jobs in two years, Department of Finance documents show. Overall, Schwarzenegger's budget calls for 329,045 positions next year, up 3.5 percent from two years ago.

Lawmakers are scheduled to vote today on a budget that Democratic backers say closely mirrors Schwarzenegger's proposal. Although Republicans are expected to withhold their support for the plan under consideration today, the vast majority of Schwarzenegger's budget proposals are likely to be approved when lawmakers reach a final deal.

"The wheels of government just go on and on," said Ron Roach, a spokesman for the California Taxpayers' Association, a watchdog group in Sacramento that has been critical of increases in government spending. "It's hard to slay the dragon."

By contrast, the state eliminated roughly 10,000 full-time jobs through attrition in 2003-2004, the year that voters tossed Gov. Gray Davis out of office and replaced him with Schwarzenegger. But state employment generally grew steadily under Davis as well, even after he announced a hiring freeze.

Ken Mandler, editor of the Capitol Weekly, a newspaper that specializes in reporting on state jobs, said hiring ground to a halt for months before and after the recall election because of confusion about what would happen. The state also was in the midst of a fiscal crisis as revenue plummeted after the dot-com crash and the state deficit soared. In December 2003, Moody's downgraded California's credit rating to the worst level in state history.

"The bureaucracy was paralyzed. They didn't do anything," Mandler said. "Now it's back to normal."

State revenue is now slowly rising, making it possible to add employees and still maintain a balanced budget, said H.D. Palmer, a spokesman at the Department of Finance.

Even so, administration officials say Schwarzenegger has approved new hires only in areas where they are needed.

"It's not like there's a wholesale hiring spree going on," Palmer said.

For instance, Palmer said the state has been forced to add thousands of prison jobs to handle the large number of inmates and comply with court orders requiring the state to provide prisoners with better health care.

Under Schwarzenegger's budget, the prison system is slated to have more than 57,600 full-time positions next year, up nearly 6,700 or 13 percent from last fiscal year. That includes staff for a new maximum-security state prison in Kern County, which is expected to house 5,000 inmates when it is fully opened in January.

Other state agencies, such the Department of Justice and the Health and Human Services Agency, must add jobs to comply with voter initiatives, such as DNA testing required by Proposition 69 and increased mental health services mandated by Proposition 63. The Department of Mental Health also plans to open a new 1,500-bed hospital in Coalinga this fall, 60 miles southwest of Fresno.

Schwarzenegger also has allowed many state licensing boards and bureaus, which had been under a hiring freeze, to start adding employees. Unlike most departments, Palmer pointed out, state licensing agencies generally support themselves through licensing fees, which can't be diverted to other programs or used to pay down the state debt. So, Palmer said, it made no sense to freeze the funds.

A spokesman for the Department of Consumer Affairs, the umbrella agency for licensing boards and bureaus, said several boards already have been able to hire additional staff to reduce a backlog of complaints about everyone from nurses to building contractors. The department has shortened the wait for people who call its main consumer information hot line -- (800) 952-5210 -- said the spokesman, Russ Heimerich.

CalEPA said it plans to add a couple dozen employees to oversee the cleanup of more contaminated sites around the state. And it's hiring 35 more workers to create a stronger program along the border with Mexico to reduce air pollution, mostly caused by cars and trucks, said Jon Myers, a department spokesman.

Schwarzenegger's administration also has tried to reduce spending in other areas, but faced resistance, Palmer said.

The Legislature, for example, rejected Schwarzenegger's proposal to eliminate 120 jobs at the state printing office, even though demand is so slack that 119 jobs are vacant, Palmer said. Schwarzenegger's administration would prefer to send most printing jobs to outside printers, saying that would be more efficient.

"This is the kind of headwind we are running into," Palmer said.

State lawmakers gave a cool reception to recommendations by the governor's California Performance Review team to streamline many agencies and eliminate some entire departments, and the governor has not aggressively pushed wholesale reorganization proposals.

But some say there's a gap between Schwarzenegger's words and his actions. The Republican governor routinely accuses the Democrat-controlled Legislature of being "addicted to spending," and in January, Schwarzenegger told the Sacramento Bee's editorial board that he wanted to "starve the public sector."

"Once again, he's shown there is no correlation between what he says and what he does," said state Treasurer Phil Angelides, a relentless Schwarzenegger critic who is running for governor. "He says he would cut the waste, fraud and abuse of state government, and the state payroll keeps growing."

Angelides, a Democrat who claims to have cut 7 percent of the jobs in his own department, said the governor could do much more to make state government efficient. "If we don't need positions, we should eliminate them," he said.

Overall, employment has been flat at agencies outside the governor's control. It's fallen at some agencies, like the University of California, but it's increased at others, such as the State Compensation Insurance Fund, which sells workers' compensation coverage. The insurance fund experienced significant growth

after several private carriers withdrew from the market or went bankrupt, although a spokesman said that that growth has stopped.

The final number of new positions statewide for next fiscal year's budget is not likely to change substantially as budget negotiations wind down.

Democratic lawmakers recently agreed to set aside their differences with the Republican governor and approve a no-new-taxes budget they say is similar to Schwarzenegger's proposal. But Republican lawmakers, who hold veto power over the budget, say the Democrats' plan exacerbates the deficit in future years.

Now hiring

When he was running for governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger said he would curb government spending. But the state is increasing its workforce by about 3.5 percent over two years, and the percentage is even higher in agencies directly controlled by the governor. Here are the numbers for agencies he controls:

175,830 - number of jobs in 2003-2004

187,170 - number of jobs proposed for 2005-2006

6% - Increase over two years

Air Quality an Overlooked Casualty of War

Baghdad's electricity shortage has spawned a city of gas-run generators, a prime source of the growing pollution problem.

By Carol J. Williams, Times Staff Writer

[Los Angeles Times, Thursday, June 30, 2005](#)

BAGHDAD - A massive generator outside the Ministry of the Environment belches smoke, drips oil and roars above the noise of traffic, glaring testimony to the low priority given to protecting air quality in the war ravaged Iraqi capital.

Gas flare-offs from oil fields, smoldering fires along sabotaged pipelines, groaning generators on every street corner have spread a gray haze over much of Iraq, aggravating respiratory problems and threatening caustic inversions as people brace for the dreaded heat of summer when temperatures climb past the 120-degree mark.

Electricity Minister Muhsin Shalash warned recently that the ad hoc gasoline-run electricity generators already blighting Baghdad would continue to proliferate as the mercury climbs between now and September and residents rely on them to run air conditioners and appliances.

"The situation is dire, and it won't improve for years," Shalash said, recalling that Iraq had the best electricity system in the Middle East before two decades of war and international sanctions derailed maintenance and investment.

More than two years after the fall of President Saddam Hussein, with reconstruction programs running well behind schedule because of the widespread insurgency, residents of Baghdad dependent on the public power grid usually get only six to eight hours of service per day. The electricity usually comes in three increments, separated by four- to six-hour blackouts.

With the nation's power plants producing about 65% of pre-invasion output, according to Shalash, tens of thousands of Iraqis have taken matters into their own hands by buying gas-powered generators or tapping into miniature electric stations set up illegally in their neighborhoods.

In a country where gasoline is traditionally cheap and plentiful, enterprising technicians have been installing and maintaining large generators and running power lines to homes on a pay-per-hour basis. Foreign advisors to the Iraqi government complain that the upstart generator operators are competing with state-run power plants for diesel fuel being imported to compensate for production shortfalls.

"You find at least two large generators in every street, and most homes have their own small one," said Hifa Abed Kareem Nosaif, a physicist and senior analyst at the Environment Ministry.

Nosaif estimates that the number of gas-fired generators has increased 50-fold in the capital, where wealthy and middle-class Iraqis can augment the paltry public power supply to run air conditioning and

televisions, two services many consider vital now that traditional pastimes such as strolling and cafe visits are unsafe because of the ongoing insurgency.

Until government power generation can meet demand, officials concede, authorities have no leverage to persuade citizens to pull the plug on the improvised power supplies blamed for much of the air pollution.

Adding to the noxious cloud hovering over Baghdad is the swelling fleet of aging vehicles and their emissions. More than 1 million cars have been imported in the last two years, many of them older models that fail to meet current licensing standards in Europe.

"The level of contaminants in the air has more than doubled since the war, and vehicles are responsible for 60% of the contamination," said Raad Mohammed Saleh, head of the ministry's air quality department.

"We need at least five years to correct the current problems, and only then given the right equipment and technology and proper international aid," he lamented.

Environmental engineer Suzan Samy has studied the effects of suspended particles on those with respiratory illnesses and concluded that the number of patients seeking medical help tripled on days when atmospheric conditions caused the pollutants to be trapped at ground level.

"The contamination directly influences the health of Iraqis living in Baghdad," she said.

At the capital's Asthma and Respiratory Hypersensitivity Center, director Shakeer Saffar says comparison of patient complaints in 2001 with the volume now handled by the center shows a dramatic increase in asthma and bronchitis cases. He declined to provide statistics, noting that treatment interruptions, disrupted medical supplies, and the loss of professional staffers since the March 2003 invasion made it difficult to determine how much of the increase was attributable to heightened pollution.

Visitors to the medical center contend that their ailments are a direct result of the worsening air quality.

Ziad Saafy brought his 3-year-old daughter, Noor, to the respiratory center early this month after the latest of dozens of attacks of allergic bronchitis.

"All the doctors advise me to keep her away from the polluted air that is triggering the attacks, but how can I do that? She's even affected by car exhaust and the electric generator near our home," Saafy said of his wheezing daughter.

In addition to the smog, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers are being polluted by new and old industries that dump their wastes into the waterways, Nosaif said. The thriving cement and brick factories turning out construction supplies for the post-invasion repair boom are the worst culprits, he said.

"The owners of these establishments have no fear of any authority and continue dumping their wastes into the rivers because it is easier and cheaper than proper disposal," he said.

Infectious diseases such as typhoid and hepatitis are on the rise from sewer-system damage that allows wastewater to mix with drinking water and from oil spills into the rivers caused by insurgent attacks on pipelines, he added.

Little progress has been made in repairing leaks and breakages, Nosaif said, because neither Iraqi technicians nor U.S.-led forces can work safely at the sites that, like the rest of the country, are vulnerable to insurgent bombings and drive-by shootings.

The United Nations Environmental Program and advisors from the U.S. government are at work with Iraqi officials to identify objectives to be contained in a new environmental law. Once the component rules and regulations are specified, the law will be drafted by a Middle Eastern law firm and presented to the transitional Iraqi National Assembly by fall, those guiding the process said.

"We believe Iraq to be an important member of the international community, and as such they will need to have an environmental law that in some way reflects international environmental standards if they are to succeed in attracting investments as well as money from donor nations," said Keith Easton, a U.S. environmental lawyer under contract with the Environment Ministry.

But both Iraqi and foreign experts are wary of the clout wielded by the ministries for oil and electricity, the former providing about 90% of Iraqi national income and the latter under intense social pressure to improve the power output. Those operations account for much of the air pollution, but neither the

government nor the population is probably willing to sacrifice lifestyle-improving production for better environmental protection.

Times staff writer Caesar Ahmed contributed to this report.

Hahn Supports Port Task Force's Plan

Outgoing mayor urges successor to take action to cut pollution to 2001 levels. Industry officials question the proposal.

By Deborah Schoch, Times Staff Writer

[Los Angeles Times, Thursday, June 30, 2005](#)

Mayor James K. Hahn, in one of his last actions, will recommend that his successor, Antonio Villaraigosa, take action on a massive plan to reduce Port of Los Angeles air pollution to 2001 levels.

The statement from his office Wednesday did not formally approve the plan forged by a 21-member task force, despite a letter urging him to do that, signed by the group's community, labor, public health and environmental representatives.

Industry representatives, who were also part of the task force, have questioned the plan's viability.

The statement brought to an inconclusive close his much-touted 2001 pledge to halt the growth of pollution from the city-owned port. Since he made that promise, port-related diesel emissions have soared nearly 64%.

Hahn's office issued a one-sentence statement about the report issued last week by the task force Hahn created to find innovative ways to tackle the problem.

"Mayor Hahn will recommend that the Villaraigosa administration adopt the report's finding to make sure the Port of Los Angeles is the nation's leader in clean air standards," said spokesman Jeff Millman, who read the statement.

The task force recommended at least 68 ways that pollution could be reduced over 20 years at a cost of at least \$11 billion.

"I'm bitterly disappointed that Jim Hahn didn't deliver on his promise of 'no net increase,' and now, four years down the road, the hot potato's being tossed to Antonio Villaraigosa," said San Pedro activist Noel Park.

Villaraigosa is expected to replace most or all harbor commissioners. Councilwoman Janice Hahn, the mayor's sister, said the plan would have more weight if the new commission acts on it. She said she would press on with a motion to have Hahn's task force continue its work.

Shipping industry spokesman Tupper Hull reiterated concerns that the plan is unworkable. "It cannot, unfortunately, be used as the blueprint it set out to be," Hull said.

[Sacramento Bee, Editorial, Thursday, June 30, 2005:](#)

Editorial: Solar shakedown

Unions threaten bill with wage demands

If ever there was a time for California to embrace solar power, it is the summer of 2005. Oil now tops \$60 a barrel. The power grid is fragile. Californians are short of sustainable electricity, yet they have barely tapped the plentiful rays of the sun.

Solar's future is bright, but in the bowels of the Legislature, business remains murky, as usual. There, labor unions are demanding that private contractors pay "prevailing wages" to workers who install solar panels as part of SB 1, the governor's legislation to help provide solar energy to 1 million homes.

Industry unions have won important victories for their members in recent years, but in this case, they are going too far. In fact, they are engaged in a shameful shakedown.

As the union leadership is well aware, the prevailing wage demand could kill SB 1. All state construction projects must now pay prevailing wages. Now the unions want those wages - effectively union wages - to

apply to any large-scale development that receives a state subsidy. It's a costly precedent, one that would destroy the basic economics of the governor's plan.

If they were forced to pay prevailing wages, solar industry leaders say it would drive up the total cost of a photovoltaic system by 15 percent to 40 percent. Homeowners would be less likely to opt for solar panels. California citizens, including union households, would be deprived of a technology that could create 3,000 megawatts of clean power by 2018.

As everyone in the energy business knows, solar already struggles to compete. Solar doesn't pollute like coal-powered plants or pose the terrorist concerns that liquefied natural gas terminals do. It doesn't create long-lived waste from nuclear reactors or kill birds, as wind turbines do.

Yet all these factors are often ignored when businesses and governments evaluate the higher costs of solar. Union leaders threaten to tip the balance against this technology - one that could create jobs here in California - by insisting on prevailing wages. And they are pressing their demands just as a historic compromise is within reach.

Under the governor's plan, large-scale developers would be required to offer solar as an option to new home buyers, just as they offer tile floors and granite countertops. A typical two-kilowatt system would cost about \$15,000. The state would offset that investment with a \$5,000 rebate, financed through surcharges on electric bills, plus a \$1,000 tax credit.

In recent months, SB 1 authors Sens. Kevin Murray, D-Culver City, and John Campbell, R-Irvine, have worked to fix numerous concerns about the bill. To win over consumer groups, the senators recently agreed to place a \$2.5 million cap on the total subsidy, ensuring that ratepayers are protected. To appease unions and get the bill out of the Senate, proponents agreed to let only contractors with the highest trained electricians install solar systems, instead of electricians with licenses specifically designed for solar.

These were major concessions, but apparently not enough for the union leadership. They are holding out for prevailing wages, the same demand that sidetracked SB 1 last year.

Ironically, the solar shakedown comes just as labor leaders pretend to hold hands with environmentalists and sing "Kumbaya." In a recent speech, Bob Balgenorth, president of the State Building and Construction Trades Council, told conservationists that "we will never sacrifice our long-term economic or environmental future for a short-term deal."

With SB 1, the unions are doing just that. Environmental leaders should call them on this shakedown. If they don't, a historic opportunity to promote clean energy will be lost.

[Letter to the Merced Sun-Star, Thursday, June 30, 2005:](#)

Not in my back yard

Editor: Once again, the NIMBYs have struck. (Not In My Back Yard). First the gentleman from Fresno, now Donnie Fontana from Modesto.

Both of them praise the possibilities of the proposed Riverside Motorsports Park. I am certain I speak for many others when I say let them have the raceway in their city. Let them have the air and noise pollution. Let them have the traffic congestion. Since both of them seem to make the point that they are big NASCAR fans, if the raceway were in their city, they could save money on gas and food.

Ron Loewe, Atwater