

[Sun Post, Guest Commentary, Monday, May 21, 2007](#)

Valley air is getting better to breathe

By Seyed Sadredin, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

Air quality in the San Joaquin Valley is better than it has ever been in recorded history. With tough regulations, innovative measures and investment by businesses and residents, air pollution has been reduced significantly throughout the valley.

Despite this tremendous progress, the valley's pollution-retaining geography and meteorology make meeting new, federal ozone and particulate standards a challenge that is unmatched by any other region in the nation.

After reducing valley smog by 80 percent since the 1980s, eliminating the remainder will not be cheap and cannot happen overnight. On April 30, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's governing board adopted the first eight-hour ozone plan in California.

This overarching and comprehensive plan is designed to help the valley attain cleaner air, as measured by the federal smog standard, as expeditiously as practicable. The regulatory cost to businesses will be about \$20 billion. The board members should be commended for their courage, resoluteness and commitment to clean air.

In fact, an objective assessment of the board's work on air quality gives valley residents a great deal to be proud of. A child born today in the valley breathes air that is 80 percent cleaner than it was 25 years ago and that now meets the federal standard for particles 10 microns and smaller. The valley is the only "serious" non-compliant area in the state to meet the standard for airborne particles of this size, and it did it five years ahead of the federal deadline. The valley also is on track to meet the one-hour ozone standard by 2010, making it the only "extreme non-attainment" area in the state on track to do so.

The district's recently adopted plan to meet the new federal, health-based ozone standard is the first of its kind in the nation. Under the plan, 50 percent of the valley's population will live in "attainment" areas — that is, areas without any recorded violations of the air-pollution standard — by 2015; that number will increase to 90 percent by 2020.

Undisputed analysis by experts shows that even if money were no object and we ignored all logistical constraints, the technology available today and in the foreseeable future could not reduce smog-forming emissions enough for these areas to attain the clean-air standard any sooner than 2023. In this situation, the only option provided under federal law is to seek an "extreme" designation and incorporate future technology when it becomes available — thus, the proposed deadline of 2023.

All local measures that can be adopted by the air district will be in place by 2010. As a result, every area in the valley will see significant, steady reductions in ozone concentrations and the number of days above the standard.

The measures contained in the ozone plan also will help the valley meet the federal standard for fine particles by 2015. (Fine particles are 2.5 microns and smaller.) This makes the valley the only non-compliant area in the state on track to meet this standard by the deadline. Doing so will eliminate more than \$3 billion per year of the estimated \$3.1 billion annual health-related costs attributed to airborne particles in the valley.

With public health as the foremost priority, the air district's governing board also acted to seek other innovative and creative strategies to clean the air. These measures, which focus on alternative modes of goods- and people-movement, as well as alternative fuels and energy, will require broad support from the public, as well as business and government.

About 80 percent of our smog-causing pollutants come from mobile sources over which the air district has no jurisdiction. More than ever, we will need the state and federal government to do

their fair share for the valley by providing funding and regulatory assistance to reduce emissions from cars, trucks and locomotives.

By any objective measure, the plan adopted by the air district is a comprehensive effort that leaves no stone unturned to bring the valley into attainment with federal air-quality standards as quickly as possible. Those who champion clean air are invited to join us on this challenging but fulfilling journey to cleaner air in the valley.

Seyed Sadredin is executive director and air pollution control officer for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

[Merced Sun-Star, Commentary, Sunday, May 20, 2007:](#)

Commentary: Breathe easier knowing air is cleaner

Air quality in the San Joaquin Valley is better than it has ever been in recorded history. With tough regulations, innovative measures and investment by businesses and residents, air pollution has been reduced significantly throughout the Valley. Despite this tremendous progress, the Valley's pollution-retaining geography and meteorology make meeting new, federal ozone and particulate standards a challenge that is unmatched by any other region in the nation.

Having already reduced Valley smog by 80 percent since the 1980s, virtually eliminating the remainder will not be cheap and cannot happen overnight. On April 30, the Air District's governing board adopted the first eight-hour ozone plan in California. This overarching and comprehensive plan is designed to help the Valley attain cleaner air, as measured by the federal smog standard, as expeditiously as practicable. The regulatory cost to businesses will be about \$20 billion. The board members should be commended for their courage, resoluteness and commitment to clean air.

In fact, an objective assessment of the board's work on air quality gives Valley residents a great deal to be proud of. A child born today in the Valley breathes air that is 80 percent cleaner than it was 25 years ago and that now meets the federal standard for particles 10 microns and smaller. The Valley is the only "serious" noncompliant area in the state to meet the standard for airborne particles of this size, and we did it five years ahead of the federal deadline. The Valley also is on track to meet the one-hour ozone standard by 2010, making it the only "extreme non-attainment" area in the state on track to do so. Meeting this health-based standard will further diminish the proven respiratory and health-related ailments associated with strong ozone concentrations.

The district's recently adopted plan to meet the new, federal, health-based ozone standard is the first of its kind in the nation. Under the plan, 50 percent of the Valley's population will live in "attainment" areas -- that is, areas without any recorded violations of the air-pollution standard -- by 2015; that number will increase to 90 percent by 2020. By law, the Valley cannot claim attainment because in a couple of areas, air pollution still will violate the standard at least a few days each year until 2023.

Undisputed analysis by experts shows that even if money were no object and we ignored all logistical constraints, the technology available today and in the foreseeable future could not reduce smog-forming emissions enough for these areas to attain the clean-air standard any sooner than 2023. In this situation, the only option provided under federal law is to seek an "extreme" designation and incorporate future technology when it becomes available -- thus, the proposed deadline of 2023. All local measures that can be adopted by the air district will be in place by 2010. As a result, every area in the Valley will see significant, steady reductions in ozone concentrations and the number of days above the standard.

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About 80 percent of our smog-causing pollutants come from mobile sources over which the air district has no jurisdiction. More than ever, we will need the state and federal government to do their fair share for the Valley by providing funding and regulatory assistance to reduce emissions from cars, trucks and locomotives.

By any objective measure, the plan adopted by the air district is a comprehensive effort that leaves no stone unturned to bring the Valley into attainment with federal air-quality standards as quickly as possible. Those who champion clean air are invited to join us on this challenging but fulfilling journey to cleaner air in the Valley.

Seyed Sadredin

EDITOR'S NOTE: Sadredin is executive director/air pollution control officer of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Air District puts more burn restrictions

Special to The Madera Tribune

Saturday, May 19, 2007

The Governing Board of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District voted Thursday to prohibit burning of orchard removals starting June 1.

As a result, farmers must start using alternative methods to dispose of orchard-removal waste, such as by chipping or mulching.

The new ruling is expected to reduce nearly 2,400 tons per year of smog-forming and particle emissions valley-wide. Specifically, the rule reduces 811 tons per year of volatile organic compounds, 644 tons of nitrogen oxides and 938 tons of particulate matter ten microns and smaller (PM10).

The Air District has acted twice before to reduce agricultural burning; the first action in 2004 restricted the burning of diseased crops and the second in 2005 affected field crops. Orchard removals represent about 50 percent of all agricultural burning in the San Joaquin Valley.

As prescribed by state law (SB 705) that mandate phasing out agricultural burning, the rule adopted yesterday allows for minor exceptions in situations where feasible alternatives to burning don't currently exist. Although the law doesn't specify a deadline for the exemptions to be lifted, the board voted in the interest of public health to shorten the timeframe from 2015 to 2010.

The extension was granted for citrus, apple, pear, quince and fig orchards, as well as rice, because these crops either can contain a pervasive tree disease that is transferable unless the waste is burned, or because an alternative disposal method doesn't exist. Orchard removals 20 acres or smaller were granted the extension because the cost of alternative disposal methods would be between 18 and 252 percent, or higher, of the farmers' net profits per acre.

The exempt orchards make up only 10 percent of the San Joaquin Valley's total emissions from agricultural burning. Burning still won't be allowed on smoggy days in the San Joaquin Valley or during conditions that could lead to a violation of federal air quality standards.

"The state legislature can give us more tools to facilitate alternatives to open burning that are economically feasible," said Seyed Sadredin, the district's air pollution control officer and executive director.

For example, Sadredin said, burning of chipped agricultural waste at biomass power plants is a cleaner alternative than open burning. But biomass facilities don't have an incentive to use agricultural waste.

"Due to the state's dysfunctional energy policy, it doesn't make economic sense for a biomass power plant to use large amounts of agricultural waste as fuel," Sadredin said.

He added that the Air District will ask state legislators - including Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, who wrote the law on agricultural burning restrictions - to author legislation offering biomass power plants a higher price for the electricity they sell to utilities and to require a greater use of agricultural waste.

The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the valley portion of Kern. For more information, contact the nearest district office in Fresno at 230-6000.

Another ethanol plant in the works

By Eiji Yamashita

Hanford Sentinel, Sunday, May 20, 2007

A Bakersfield company is now eyeing Hanford for its new ethanol plant after another firm temporarily pulled the plug on its plan last month.

Great Valley Ethanol's plan - although facing some delay - appears to be moving forward for now.

The notice of preparation for the project environmental study started circulating this week.

Early next month, the public will have an opportunity to learn about and comment on the corn ethanol plant, proposed for south Hanford.

Hanford city officials announced last week they will hold a public scoping meeting on the plant. Great Valley Ethanol wants to put the plant in the Kings Industrial Park.

"This is the public's first opportunity to provide input on the environmental review for the ethanol plant," said city Economic Development Manager Barbara McCurdy Marty. "The project of this scale is complex and involves different aspects that are important to find out about."

The meeting will provide a project overview while seeking public input into what specific environmental concerns should be addressed through the comprehensive environmental study, which will be prepared through this fall, McCurdy Marty said.

The meeting will take place at 7 p.m. on June 6 at the City Council Chambers, 400 N. Douty St.

Great Valley Ethanol wants to build a plant on a 112-acre parcel at the southwest corner of Iona and 10th avenues. The plant would produce 63-million-gallons a year of corn ethanol that would be used as a gasoline blend stock.

The company's plan first came to light earlier this year, as Pacific Ethanol, a Sacramento-based company, also filed paperwork with Kings County to build a plant nearby. But Pacific Ethanol put its project on hold last month, citing ethanol market volatility.

Officials of Great Valley Ethanol say their project is well on track, although their initial plan to break ground in August has apparently been delayed.

"We're confident that it's going to happen," said Brian Pellens, the firm's vice president of operations. "The Industrial Park is a good site. The market for distilled grains is strong. The project makes a lot of sense."

If built, the Great Valley Ethanol plant is expected to bring 36 full-time jobs to the county, Pellens said.

The company is also bring a side operation that would recycle carbon dioxide - a byproduct of ethanol production - for beverage carbonation.

"We're trying to garner some interests in that," Pellens said. "We'd like it to happen."

If the attempt is successful, that would mean 10 additional jobs to the area, he said.

About 20 percent of the grain used for the production of ethanol will be locally produced corn, but the company says the rest would be shipped in from the Midwest.

The production of ethanol from corn involves grinding of the grain and mixing with water and enzymes. The mash is cooked and mixed with yeast and allowed to ferment. The final product is mixed with 5-percent gasoline to "denature" the product before shipping.

Grain by-products from the distillation process - a product of high nutrition value - will be sold to area dairies as livestock feed.

The copy of the notice of preparation, which provides a basic project description and preliminary environmental assessment of the project, is available to the public at the city community development department, 317 N. Douty St.

Comments on the notice will be accepted by the city until June 15.

The June meeting is one of three opportunities for the residents to provide input in an open public process.

In October, the city council will hold a public hearing on the draft environmental impact report. The last public hearing will take place in December, when the final report comes before the city council for certification.

Pellens said the company does not anticipate a delay in the process.

For more information regarding the June 6 meeting, call McCurdy Marty, city economic development manager.

The company profiles and the project overview are on the Web site: www.gr8valley.com.

Company cited for stink in mid-April

Business could be fined up to \$25,000 for creating pungent odor

BY KEVIN GERRITY, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Monday, May 21, 2007

Air pollution authorities have cited Subservice Oil Field Specialists for allegedly creating what many residents may remember as the biggest stink in recent Bakersfield history.

The nuisance violation was sent to the small company at 4808 Ortiz Court within days after the mid-April release of a pungent chemical odor that's largely used to warn of the presence of natural gas, said Brenda Turner, public information officer with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Turner said two workers were apparently attempting to clean out a tank that contained an odorant known as methylmercaptan when the discharge occurred in the early evening hours of April 19.

"I think that they thought it was already empty," Turner said.

The company did not respond to calls requesting comment.

After a three-month settlement process, Turner said the district could fine Subservice as much as \$25,000, depending on the company's liability and public threat.

The Kern County Environmental Health Services Department is investigating Subservice, but spokesman Matt Constantine said its focus is on prevention.

Eventually, though, the department could ask the company to cover the investigation's costs, he said.

Nobody was injured by the gas, but residents were alarmed.

Turner said several hundred calls were logged with 911 and PG&E.

The chemical is poisonous with direct exposure, but it poses no threat when dispersed, said Capt. Doug Johnston of the Kern County Fire Department.

"It makes a skunk smell good," Johnston said. "Just a tiny bit goes a long way."

The odor originated near James Road and Highway 65, spread into northwest Bakersfield, then swept through downtown and ultimately traveled as far south as Lamont, authorities said.

Some 20 firefighters, environmental experts and ambulance crews converged on the scene. Johnston said two workers were decontaminated.

Data about this discharge has prompted the environmental health department to use the incident as a case study, Constantine said.

The study, he said, would help prepare the department if a similar incident happened among the 3,000 companies it has permitted to use hazardous materials.

"This information could give us an educated guess about how a hazardous material is disseminated through the community," Constantine said.

Outside firm to review refinery expansion

Board seeks information on safer alternatives to hazardous chemical

BY STACEY SHEPARD, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, May 20, 2007

Kern County has hired an outside consultant to review the impacts of a proposed expansion of the refinery on Rosedale Highway.

An environmental document on the expansion was made public in February, but county planners decided to revise it following controversy over the refinery's planned use of a dangerous chemical called hydrofluoric acid, or HF. The refinery is owned by Big West of California.

Since then, refinery officials said they will use a modified form of the chemical, which makes it easier to contain in the event of a spill. But county officials want to be sure they have a full understanding of all other alternatives to HF.

"We thought it would be appropriate to have an independent, third-party evaluation ... to give assurance that a reasonable range of alternatives have been considered," said Ted James, Kern County Planning Director.

HF is one of two liquid acids used as a catalyst in a refining process known as alkylation. The product, alkylate, boosts octane in fuel and is a premium blending stock for cleaner burning gasoline and diesel required under California law.

HF is viewed by many to be more dangerous than sulfuric acid because it vaporizes when released into the air, forming a cloud that hangs low to the ground and can travel to surrounding areas. Exposure can range from skin and tissue burns to death.

A cloud containing lethal concentrations of HF drifted up to five miles from its release point during an industry-sponsored test in the Nevada desert in 1986.

Modified HF, which the refinery now plans to use, contains an additive that suppresses the acid's ability to vaporize and form a cloud.

Sulfuric acid remains a liquid when exposed to air, making a spill easier to contain.

Big West Vice President and Manager Gene Cotten said the company rejected sulfuric acid as an option because it produces a lower-quality product, requires more volume of acid and requires refrigeration, using more energy. In addition, spent HF acid can be regenerated on-site but sulfuric acid must be trucked to a regeneration plant in Los Angeles or San Francisco. Big West estimated using sulfuric acid would create about 14,600 truck trips a year compared with about 100 with HF.

Big West's sister refinery in Utah, the only other refinery owned by parent company Flying J, uses unmodified HF. Cotten said familiarity with using HF there was another reason why the company selected it for use at the Bakersfield plant.

Pam Pryor, a manager for DuPont Stratco, a company that licenses alkylation processes, said the use of HF gained awareness in the late 1980s, following an HF release at a Texas City, Texas, refinery that created a traveling cloud. More than 1,000 people were treated for injuries and 4,000 had to be evacuated.

The same year, an HF release at the Exxon Mobil refinery in Torrance resulted in an attempt by the local air district to ban the substance. Instead, it convinced local refineries to switch to modified HF.

But, Pryor said, it's common for companies to stick with what they know.

"We've seen that influence on projects," she said. "The thinking is 'We've done this before, we're comfortable with it.'"

Cal Hodge, who has decades of experience in the refining industry and is now president of A 2nd Opinion, a fuels consulting firm in Texas, said when you compare today's modified HF with sulfuric acid, modified is as safe as sulfuric acid.

To reach this conclusion, he considered the risk involved with the frequent transport of sulfuric acid to and from a regenerating plant.

"If I had to choose, I would lean toward modified HF," he said, because modified HF costs less than sulfuric acid and produces alkylate with slightly higher octane.

Other options for refineries exist, Hodge said, including the use of solid acid catalysts, which further decrease dangers associated with spills.

In the environmental review document, Big West said it explored this option but dismissed it because the company did not view it as viable because it's not used commercially.

Another process on the horizon is an enhanced sulfuric acid method that uses significantly less acid and produces a higher-quality alkylate.

But these methods aren't commercially proven, Hodge said, meaning a process has worked in a pilot plant and could work on a commercial scale, but no company has bought it yet.

"If you really want to push technology and look at new things, I think we can. You don't always have to do what you did last year," Hodge said. "The only problem is that it will delay (Big West's) facility one to two years and California is short on gas and you already have the highest gas prices in the country."

Several alternatives to traditional alkylation technologies have been developed but not yet adapted in a commercial setting. They include:

- Several companies have developed solid acid catalysts, which reduce the risks and problems with containing liquid acids in the event of a spill.
- At least one company has developed an enhanced sulfuric acid process that uses significantly less acid than traditional methods and produces a higher quality product.

Source: Cal Hodge, president of A 2nd Opinion, a Texas-based clean fuels and regulatory consulting firm

S.J. residents dipping their toes into alternative energy

By Alex Breitler - Record Staff Writer

Stockton Record, Sunday, May 20, 2007

STOCKTON - Don Halnan doesn't buy global warming. "It's a bunch of barnyard fertilizer," he said.

Yet 52 solar panels glisten atop his north Stockton home. They soak up sunshine and, indirectly, at least, power Halnan's [emissions-free electric lawn mower](#) and the energy-saving light bulbs in his remodeled kitchen.

Halnan, a retired corrections officer and former school bus driver, spent about \$30,000 - that's after \$15,000 in rebates - on his solar panels in August. By Wednesday, they'd generated enough energy to offset 7,750 pounds of emissions of carbon dioxide, a gas that is widely blamed for contributing to the gradual warming of Earth.

Power up

To learn more about solar energy and how you can try it out at home, visit www.gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov. Other ways to save energy can be found at the Pacific Gas and Electric Co. Web site, www.pge.com.

On a sunny morning, Halnan's panels were also feeding power into the electric grid, which should reduce his monthly utility bill.

"I'm not a greenie. I'm not a tree-hugger. But I'll do my part," said Halnan, 68, who owns Quality Tune-Up No. 11 on Holman Road.

Experts say Halnan's story isn't unique. More people are experimenting with alternative sources of energy like solar and wind, and for any number of reasons.

Some worry about climate change. Others worry about their monthly utility bills. Still others view these projects as a kind of hobby or toy.

"At the end of the day, it doesn't matter what reasons people have for investing in clean, renewable energy, whether it's saving money or saving the environment," said Bernadette Del Chiaro, a spokeswoman for the conservation group Environment California. "We need all hands on deck."

Pacific Gas and Electric Co. reports almost 15,000 customers have gone solar from Bakersfield to the Oregon border. That's about one in every 300 PG&E account holders; the utility has 5 million overall.

The state is in the midst of a 10-year, \$350 million program to encourage solar in new-home construction. But retrofitting existing homes is also a priority of the larger California Solar Initiative.

The initial cost might deter average families, said Stockton's Rich Remington, who installed Halnan's solar panels.

It can take anywhere from seven to 16 years before you've saved enough money on your bills to offset the cost of the panels, he said. The less power you use, the longer the wait.

So why take the plunge? "People's opinions are all over the place," said Remington, the owner of BTA Solar. "I've talked to people pushing 80 years old, and they say, 'Gosh, this global warming thing, I'm kind of scared.'"

Others want to make a one-time investment in the hopes that their utility bills are manageable in an uncertain future. Halnan falls into this camp, although he said he doesn't know if he'll ever completely pay off his panels.

He and his wife, Faith Ann, sold some property and had money left over to upgrade the house in which they've lived for 25 years.

She got fixed-up appliances and a new kitchen. Pointing to his energy-charged roof, Halnan said, "This was for me."

Symposium on pesticides set

The Fresno Bee

Monday, May 21, 2007

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation is planning a symposium Tuesday and Wednesday in Sacramento to discuss research priorities for air pollution coming from pesticides.

State officials said the symposium has limited space.

The new regulations were announced Friday. A public hearing on the regulations is scheduled at 5 p.m. July 12 in the California Kearney Agricultural Center in Parlier. Written comments may be submitted at www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/legbills/rulepkgs.htm.

Growers could take the hit in pesticide crackdown

By Hank Shaw - Capitol Bureau Chief

Stockton Record, Saturday, May 19, 2007

SACRAMENTO - State officials are hoping to clean up the air by cracking down on the use of fumigant pesticides widely used on some of San Joaquin County's biggest crops.

The state's action comes in response to a federal court order.

But it will be growers who take the hit: The state Department of Pesticide Regulation estimates farmers across the state may have to pay an extra \$10 million to \$40 million a year to use new, low-emission methods of applying the pesticides.

"Our strategy requires careful balance and close cooperation with environmental and economic stakeholders," said Department of Pesticide Regulation Director Mary-Ann Warmerdam, "But we are determined to succeed, because there is no acceptable alternative to providing clean air for all Californians."

Farm chemicals are not a major source of California's overall smog problem, but here in the Central Valley, they are among the top 10 sources of air pollution. Cars and trucks are the top source, and emissions from subdivisions, dairies and oil production around Bakersfield are other major sources.

All that bad air has driven asthma rates to the highest levels in the nation and is responsible for hundreds of respiratory-related deaths each year.

Fumigants are mostly used to "nuke" a field before planting, and one of the most powerful - methyl bromide - will kill weeds, bugs, harmful bacteria and even some plant viruses. Used improperly, however, it also can kill people.

Statewide, there were 71 probable or definite injuries from fumigants in 2005, including three in San Joaquin County, state records show.

Farmers use fumigants, typically a less toxic chemical than methyl bromide called metam-sodium, before planting nut tree orchards, vineyards and row crops. Growers of strawberries, tomatoes and melons use the chemicals widely.

They will have to use less of them under the new rules, which will require the Valley to lower pesticide-related emissions from the current 17.9 tons per day to 15.5 tons per day. The silver lining is that the state estimates that using the new low-emission methods, the Valley can meet that standard; other areas, such as Ventura County, may need to take more drastic measures.

Ripon almond grower Dave Phippen is not happy with the news. Almond growers only use serious fumigants when they replant orchards - about once every 25 years. But without them, especially methyl bromide, which is the only known killer of a particular root disease, Phippen is not sure what he will do.

"I understand we've got to have a clean environment, but they're pretty well driving agriculture out of this state," Phippen said. "I don't know if our voices aren't being heard or if no one cares."

California seeks to lower carbon content in vehicle fuels

By Aaron C. Davis, Associated Press

In the Fresno Bee, S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Friday, May 18, 2007

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Friday released a University of California study showing the state can cut gasoline prices and stimulate the economy by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in transportation fuels.

In January, he signed an executive order mandating that California refineries reduce the carbon content of passenger vehicle fuels 10 percent by 2020. The effort is critical for California to reach its target of cutting all greenhouse gas emissions over the same time by about 25 percent.

For the state to begin working on a plan to do so, however, it first needs a formula to calculate pollution from refineries and companies that blend gasoline, as well as measuring the progress.

The UC study attempts to solve the problem. It creates a complex way to measure total greenhouse gas emissions created during fuel production in the state.

The study also concludes that an emissions credit system - in which overachieving refineries can sell credits to those failing to meet the standard - could stimulate enough competition and investment in alternative fuels that California could more than achieve its 10 percent reduction goal by 2020.

"Our low-carbon standard is a solution, a policy to recognize that we can't transform our multibillion dollar fuels market unless the private sector sees a reason to invest and customers see a reason to buy," Schwarzenegger said.

In customary style, he cast the state's challenge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in outsized terms.

"This is our race to the moon," the governor said. "And like that race, this, too, would be 'one giant leap for mankind.'"

Refineries, gasoline companies and auto producers took pains Friday to stress that they support the governor's efforts. But they also raised concerns about how the state will implement the study, which will be released in its entirety on May 31.

"With all the uncertainty and unanswered questions, how do you come to the conclusion that ... it's really feasible?" said Catherine H. Reheis-Boyd, chief operating officer for the Western States Petroleum Association, which represents refineries that produce about 90 percent of all gasoline in California.

She said the industry must ask tough questions before the regulation is made final. For example, she said California must consider the greenhouse gases produced in growing and processing corn for ethanol to develop a fair formula.

"We don't want unintended consequences," she said.

Scientists offered only a peek at the formula on Friday, acknowledging that many of the details must still be worked out. The California Air Resources Board is expected to vote on it next month.

If approved, it would launch an 18-month rule-making process that would start the clock ticking toward a 2010 deadline to implement the so-called low carbon fuel standard, said Daniel Sperling, a co-author of the report.

He said one of the advantages of the credit-trading program is that it would not push refineries and fuel producers toward one technology or another.

"The government is not picking winners and losers," said Sperling, director of the Institute of Transportation Studies at the University of California, Davis. "We're creating a framework, a process to guide investment and introduce clean fuels."

If refineries have trouble meeting the standard, he said, they might be able to buy credits by investing in electricity for electric cars.

Sperling and other advocates also said they believe the low carbon fuel standard could help stabilize, if not reduce, gas prices by introducing competition to traditional gasoline imports and production.

"In the near-term it's hard to say, but in the long-term it should lower gas prices," he said. "This is not an Exxon or Chevron issue, this is a global oil issue. Oil costs about \$25 to \$30 a barrel to (produce). There's no market reason it should cost \$60 a barrel."

Governor vetoes liquefied gas proposal

Schwarzenegger cites environmental concerns in killing a plan for a terminal off the Malibu coast.

By Marc Lifsher, Times Staff Writer
L.A. Times, Saturday, May 19, 2007

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Friday vetoed a proposal to build a terminal for importing liquefied natural gas 20 miles off the coast of Malibu, but he kept the door open for future LNG projects if they are environmentally sensitive.

"California needs to diversify fuel sources for California consumers with cleaner alternatives such as LNG," the governor said. "However, any LNG import facility must meet the strict environmental standards California demands to continue to improve our air quality, protect our coast and preserve our marine environment."

Schwarzenegger's decision, contained in a letter to the U.S. Maritime Administration, echoed earlier rejections from the state Lands Commission and the California Coastal Commission of the proposal from BHP Billiton, an Australian mining and energy giant.

Environmentalists and coastal residents in Southern California praised the governor's veto, while Billiton and California business advocates were disappointed. Billiton said it had not decided whether to continue to pursue the terminal, which it calls Cabrillo Port.

The governor's letter appeared to effectively kill Billiton's effort to gain a beachhead in California's lucrative energy market. The company has been working on its \$800-million port for four years and recently had been heavily lobbying the governor's office.

As recently as Friday, the governor had voiced enthusiasm for bringing tankers of super-chilled gas to California from Australia, Africa, the Middle East and South America. He met with Australian Prime Minister John Howard about LNG imports in 2004, and, in past statements, Schwarzenegger singled out the Billiton project as his "personal preference" among several competing LNG import plans.

But Schwarzenegger, a Hummer owner who has turned himself into an international advocate for combating global warming, apparently turned sour on Billiton's terminal after environmental reviews concluded that the project would harm marine mammals, ocean views and birds near Channel Islands National Park and would contribute to smog and global warming.

The Billiton plan generated vocal opposition from local governments in Los Angeles and Ventura counties. It also troubled many of the governor's Hollywood friends with beach houses in the exclusive Malibu Colony as well as middle- and working-class residents of Oxnard and Port Hueneme.

Malibu Mayor Andy Stern said he appreciated the support of stars such as actor Pierce Brosnan and added that "the fact we had rich entertainers and people of not great wealth made the difference."

In dozens of public meetings, coastal dwellers complained that a terminal could cause environmental harm and serve as a tempting target for a potentially catastrophic terrorist attack.

Billiton spokesman Patrick Cassidy in Houston stressed that his company listened to state and local concerns and worked diligently to "design and redesign its project" since filing its terminal application in 2003.

Business lobbyists in Sacramento said they backed the Billiton proposal because it would guarantee California a reliable source of affordably priced natural gas to generate electricity for factories, stores and homes. Dorothy Rothrock, a vice president of the California Manufacturers and Technology Assn., said she was buoyed by the governor's general support for importing LNG.

"We are confident that LNG is a safe and clean alternative that will hopefully come to California soon," she said.

The governor's rejection of Billiton leaves three other companies in the race to build LNG terminals off the coasts of Ventura and Orange counties. A fourth, land-based plant, which could serve Southern California, is nearing completion in Baja California, Mexico. In January, Long Beach officials dropped plans for an LNG terminal proposed by Mitsubishi Corp. and ConocoPhillips, citing safety concerns.

Natural gas, which burns cleaner than coal or other petroleum products, currently fuels about half of all electricity generated in the state, including all recently built power plants. A state law, signed by the governor last fall, bolstered the demand for natural gas by prohibiting the importation of electricity to California by coal-fired, out-of-state power plants.

Some opponents of the Billiton project say they don't necessarily object to importing LNG, if it can be done in a safe and environmentally sensitive way. Nevertheless, they stress that before it shifts to LNG, California should focus on conservation and try to supply most of its future demand for electricity through renewable power generation from solar, wind and other nonpolluting sources.

"In the end, we may need some LNG, but from a policy standpoint it should not be where we are putting all of our emphasis," said V. John White, executive director of the Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technologies in Sacramento.

White and other renewable-energy advocates are pressing the California Legislature and Schwarzenegger to approve a bill that would direct state energy regulators to study future demands for natural gas, the need for LNG imports and which technology and location would be best for a terminal.

"It's common knowledge that these projects are stacked up one behind the other," said Oxnard Mayor Thomas Holden. "We have to look at the whole issue, how it relates to the state of California and how it relates to Oxnard."

State proposes new pesticide rules to cut down on air pollution

By OLIVIA MUNOZ, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, Contra Costa Times and San Diego Union-Tribune, Friday, May 18, 2007

Fresno, Calif. (AP) -- State regulators proposed new regulations Friday to meet a court-ordered deadline for cutting air pollution from chemicals used to kill pests, weeds and diseases in some of nation's most productive farmland.

The proposed rules make California the first state to dictate how and where several widely used fumigants can be applied on fields statewide, said Glenn Brank, spokesman for the state Department of Pesticide Regulation.

The restrictions would require any grower who uses fumigants to hire licensed people to inject them at a cost of as much as \$40 million a year. The use of certain chemicals would be capped in areas in Southern California and the San Joaquin Valley with especially dirty air.

The directive, which the agency has the authority to set, centers on fumigants — gases fruit and vegetable growers use to kill pests in the soil before planting. The chemicals have long been blamed for being part of the state's air pollution problem because they cause smog-forming gases when they evaporate from fields.

Other industries, such as oil refineries, automakers and paint manufacturers, have limits on smog-making gases called volatile organic compounds or VOCs, but this is the first time across-the-board limits were set for fumigant emissions, Brank said.

The new rules would require farmers using fumigants to hire special commercial applicators and to incorporate low-emission techniques such as injecting the gases deeper into moist soil and covering fields with heavier tarps.

The restrictions would also set caps on how much of the chemicals can be applied in the San Joaquin Valley, Ventura County and the Mojave Desert area — three of the growing regions with the worst air pollution.

Nearly 36 million pounds of seven fumigants were used on California farms in 2005, according to the state. If adopted, the new regulations would reduce pesticide emissions by 30 to 40 percent, regulators said.

They were immediately met with criticism from both growers, who said implementing them would cost them millions, and environmentalists, who said the rules were too lax.

In 1997, the state pesticide agency promised to adopt a plan for reducing fumigant emissions by 20 percent. The target went unmet, however, and several environmental groups sued in 2004, claiming the state violated national health standards for smog. Ruling in that case last year, a U.S. District Court judge in Sacramento made the voluntary reduction goal mandatory.

The state has appealed the court order, but the regulations will go through with or without an appeal, Brank said.

If they take effect as proposed, the required changes in their operations would cost growers \$10 million to \$40 million a year, making it the most costly pesticide regulation in state history, Brank said. The rules would hurt some growers more than others because some rely more heavily on fumigants.

The additional costs may force the state's strawberry growers — who provide about 88 percent of the nation's strawberries — to take one-third of their land out of production, said Mary DeGroat, a spokeswoman for the 700-member California Strawberry Commission.

"Air, water, soil — that's our livelihood," DeGroat said. "We've been trying our best to be responsible while still trying to make a living."

Many carrot, tomato and grape farmers also use the chemicals and would face high costs.

Environmental groups objected Friday to a provision that would let chemical manufacturers monitor what they are supplying to the three restricted regions and allow the head of the state pesticide agency to let growers reduce emissions by methods besides the ones stipulated in the proposed rules, he said.

"That's a loophole big enough to fly a crop duster through," said Brent Newell, an attorney with the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment, one of the groups that sued.

The proposed regulations are also flawed because the public does not play a role in holding growers accountable, he said.

"These regulations don't come even close to the changes that need to happen to make the air cleaner," he said. "The regulations proposed today are mostly unenforceable. The state isn't going to have a bunch of cops on the beat making sure growers comply."

State officials said fumigant use will be tracked by the pesticide department, agricultural commissioners and the commercial applicators, who would be required to submit monthly reports. The manufacturing companies would be required to submit them yearly.

Officials are also trying to lower smog-forming emissions from agriculture in other ways.

Air district officials in the San Joaquin Valley on Thursday voted to ban most farmers from burning orchard waste, except when there are no other feasible ways to dispose of felled trees, dead leaves and other debris. Starting June 1, growers will have to chip or mulch waste instead, a move the air district says will reduce smog-forming and particle emissions in the region by 2,400 tons per year.

The state pesticides department has scheduled public meetings on the new rules and a symposium on pesticide research.

Tourism execs encounter guilt trip on green issues

Climate change looms over a major travel industry gathering, where attendees are told to cut back on energy consumption.

By Roger Blitz, Financial Times
in the L.A. Times, Monday, May 21, 2007

LISBON — The tourism industry has never had it so good, but its senior executives are feeling strangely guilty about their success and fearful of a green backlash.

The industry is expected to expand by 4.3% a year over the next decade and managers are fretting over climate change. They worry that flying is seen as the most polluting activity and are falling over themselves to champion schemes that allow travelers to go on clocking up air miles.

"There is a real conundrum with how we grow in a way we feel good about," said Andrew Cosslett, the chief executive of InterContinental Hotels Group. "We need to find ways of making people feel very good about how they feel about these things."

Cosslett was in Lisbon this month, along with other hotel, airline and hospitality executives attending an annual global conference on travel and tourism.

Some wanted to rally governments to provide the infrastructure to meet the demand of the emerging middle classes of China, India and Mexico, who are readying themselves for global travel.

Others were worried about fuel prices, security, visa problems, technological innovation and the armies of hospitality staff needed to cope with demand which, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council, this year will generate about \$7 billion of economic activity.

But no one could escape the dark shadow of climate change, even though they wished it. "We look at climate change as an image issue," said Armin Meier, chief executive of Kuoni Travel, an operator of luxury tours.

Maurice Flanagan, vice chairman of Emirates Airline, was quite happy to share his trenchant view that global warming was "an argument." He said he was taken aback at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, this year at the way that airlines were being "demonized as the cause of all this."

Flanagan said more worrying than the apparent threat to the planet was the real threat to low-cost carriers such as EasyJet and Ryanair. "If extremists get their way, thousands and thousands of jobs in travel and tourism will be lost."

EasyJet itself was more philosophical. "The debate is over," said Stelios Haji-Ioannou, its founder. Airlines had to replace their fleets with modern fuel-efficient engines, he said, "but the replacement process is slow."

Airlines, hotels and other sectors in the industry in the next couple of weeks will pool resources in a public campaign in Britain to demonstrate that they are taking climate change seriously.

They have given up trying to argue the technical niceties of aviation's contribution to carbon emissions. Whether it is 2%, 3% or 5%, aviation has to do something, they have concluded.

For all the talk, practical, meaningful solutions were little in evidence. It fell to James Russell of the Clinton Global Initiative to tell the industry what was expected of it. "Don't be an Exxon," he told the airlines, "Work out what you can do to drive down energy consumption. Travel agents should push hotels for carbon disclosure."

He added: "The message to chief executives is that perceptions are changing and you've got between 12 and 24 months to get on that route."

Before Welcoming World, China Tries to Clear the Air

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In the N.Y Times, Sunday, May 20, 2007

Air quality remains a major concern ahead of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, an official organizing China's first Games said last week.

Factories belching pollution as they fuel breakneck economic growth and dust blowing in from thousands of work sites and the western deserts frequently brown the skies.

Although pollution controls are having an effect — Beijing experienced 241 days last year in which the air quality was rated as good, up from 100 in 1998 — there is room for progress, Wang Wei, secretary general of the organizing committee, told a conference sponsored by Asia Society in Southern California.

"We want to make sure the athletes have the best air quality," he said.

In a later interview, Wang dismissed as "an old topic" international concerns about another area where China has an image problem — human rights.

Critics of China's authoritarian government hope to swing the Olympic spotlight to issues in which Beijing promised reforms before it won the right to play host to the Olympics in 2001. Wang told reporters then that he thought the Games could promote human rights.

"I think that human rights conditions keep improving in China," Wang said Wednesday. "And I think this is going to be a good thing for the general social progress, including human rights — that's no problem."

A report last month from Amnesty International said China was limiting freedom of political dissidents, human rights activists and followers of the Falun Gong faith. The Olympics, Amnesty concluded, are actually prompting a crackdown, including sweeps of petty criminals and vagrants.

The Olympics, which begin Aug. 8, 2008, represent a coming-out party for a nation that has turned decades of stagnation into a staggering resurgence.

Though Wang tried to tamp down expectations, he called the Games a "golden opportunity for us to showcase the new China."

He said, "The world does not really know as much about China as we wish."

An estimated 500,000 visitors are expected in Beijing during the Olympics and many more will watch the Games on television.

For the hosts, it is a chance to showcase a nation that is becoming a dominant economy and a major player in global politics.

With its long view of history, China sees itself returning to an accustomed role as a world power. The nation has also been investing heavily in sports, and the potential for a haul of gold medals is a matter of national pride.

Wang promised that foreign reporters who flock to China will be free to roam the country to cover not just sports, but also the social problems created by the nation's vast wealth gap and failings of the central government to alleviate corruption and rural poverty.

He also promised a well-mannered host city — as he put it, a “sound social atmosphere” that visitors sometimes have found lacking.

He cited public education campaigns on standing in line, and not spitting or littering.

There is also a campaign to educate Chinese about how to watch sports they may not know well. Do not clap or yell, Wang pointed out, when someone is about to shoot a rifle.

Green has gone from a movement into a market

By Laura Casey, STAFF WRITER
Tri-Valley Herald, Sunday, May 20, 2007

A CAR, CLEARLY painted black, is being marketed as green. Paper towels, white as snow, are green. Even buildings, drab as the concrete sidewalks they perch upon, are green.

Is the world going color blind?

"Green" is clearly no longer just a color or a fringe political party.

The word is being used to describe environmental movements, ways of living, business models and products — basically anything that gives a nod to taking better care of Mother Earth.

But, some say the term is hopelessly vague.

"Green is pretty much whatever you want it to be these days," says Joel Makower, founder of GreenBiz.com, an online news and resource center for the greening of businesses. Makower has been in the field of being nice to the planet for 20 years and wrote a book about being a green consumer 18 years ago — a book that is now out of print.

There was no easy answer back then about what green means, Makower says, and there is no easy answer today.

"It's all relative," he says. "There are shades of green. For example, there is no green gasoline, but there are greener computers. A hybrid car is better than a conventional car, solar power is better than power from a coal plant or other fossil fuels."

In the years since Makower got interested in being green he has seen the word mutate. But not as fast as it has in the past year.

"Green has gone from a movement into a market," the Oakland-based businessman says. "I see hyperbole and general vagueness. It's become very popular to make sweeping claims about saving the planet and not hurting the bunnies."

Unlike the word "organic," the use of which federal legislation has defined to protect consumers from misuse, anyone can say they're "green."

Much like marketing terms such as "light" and "natural" and "healthy," the word green is being used to sell products whether or not there is anything substantial behind the claims.

Some environmental groups take issue with this.

Bluewater Network, an arm of Friends of the Earth, recently took aim at what is considered the greenest car company on the planet, Toyota, for its claims about being green.

In an ad that ran in Mother Jones Magazine online and in The New York Times, Bluewater criticizes the car company for making two hybrid vehicles that, according to reports from The New York Times, don't get better fuel mileage than their non-hybrid versions. The ad also attacks Toyota for being part of a group of auto makers suing to overturn California's new regulations to reduce smog and global warming pollution from vehicles.

"We're just questioning the totality of their green credentials," says Danielle Fugere, regional program director of Friends of the Earth.

"Consumers have to look beyond the marketing and really look at what is being sold," she adds.

Not everyone in the environmental field is so concerned about the word being co-opted by business to make profits.

Charlie Miller, director of communications for Environmental Defense, says that although the word is being used to describe just about everything, his organization is seeing more people getting concerned about the environment.

"We're witnessing an unprecedented public concern for environmental protection, and that's a good thing," he says. "We've been in the game for a long time, and if you could have told us three years ago that we'd be at this point right now in terms of public awareness and, more importantly, signs of action on Capitol Hill, we would be surprised.

"Things are just sort of busting loose all over," Miller says.

Consumer beware

People in the business of being green agree, however, that consumers should be wary.

Jeffrey Hollender, president and "chief inspired protagonist" for the household products company Seventh Generation, says his company shies away from using the term "green" to describe its wares.

He says the company, which uses nontoxic elements in its household cleaning products, sticks to terms that are "at least quasi-definable" such as hypo-allergenic and nontoxic.

"There are no clear standards for those, either," he laments.

Seventh Generation has been marketing products that are recycled and nontoxic for 20 years. He says the company can claim the word "green" because Seventh Generation paper products use 100 percent recycled material and are bleached without using chlorine or any chlorine byproducts.

Its cleaning products are vegetable-derived rather than petroleum-derived. And all the ingredients are posted on product labels as well as on the company's Web site.

But that alone does not mean that Seventh Generation is green, Hollender says.

"I would argue when someone thinks about a green brand to look only at the products they make is an incomplete picture," he says, adding that companies themselves have to be responsible to the environment and to their workers.

The Bay Area Green Business Program has taken some of the guesswork out of the process of determining if a company is as green as it says it is.

The program, a partnership of environmental agencies and utilities, assists, recognizes and promotes businesses and government agencies that volunteer to operate in a more environmentally responsible way, says Pam Evans, coordinator for the Alameda County Green Business Program.

It is an involved process — the agency asks companies to fill out a checklist that is a dozen pages long. Then the agency visits the workplace.

"They can't just be recycling soda cans and things like that," Evans says. "With a Bay Area Green Business Certification, you know they are at least meeting environmental compliance standards and going beyond that and that someone else besides them can attest to it."

One of those 800-plus Bay Area businesses that have been certified green is the Katovick Law Group of Oakland. Jenny Kassan, an attorney with the group, says the firm's attorneys all work from home and each one of their homes has been investigated. Each is considered green by the Bay Area Green Business Program.

Some of the law firm's green methods are easy to implement — they do not use toxic liquid paper, for example.

"We try to use e-mail instead of printed letters or faxes. Most of the products we buy are nontoxic, and we try to buy in bulk because it uses less packaging," she says. "We use energy-efficient lighting. None of us have air conditioning and, in the winter, we keep the temperatures in our homes kind of low."

Green children

While businesses are going green, so are public programs aimed at teaching children how to soften their footprints on the planet.

For example, Chabot Space and Science Center in the Oakland hills has been holding programs for youths called "Kids Go Green" where lecturers talk about global warming, composting, solar power and energy conservation. Kids also participate in projects such as building solar-powered model cars.

"Kids Go Green has been a natural evolution of all the things that are happening here," says Eric Havel, Chabot's environmental education coordinator. Chabot is applying to be a green business, has modified its mission to be more environmentally focused and is voluntarily reducing its energy and water use and waste.

"Ethically we need to be taking better care of the planet, and I think Chabot is trying to do that here," Havel says. "We've made significant strides and hopefully we can keep that going."

[Sun Post, Editorial, Monday, May 21, 2007](#)

Editorial: For the sake of future kids

A 13-year study by University of Southern California researchers isn't good news for homeowners who live behind freeway soundwalls.

A 13-year study by University of Southern California researchers isn't good news for homeowners who live behind freeway soundwalls.

USC researchers have found that children who grow up within 500 yards of a freeway have significant impairments in the development of their lungs that can lead to respiratory problems for the rest of their lives. And if they live in the San Joaquin Valley or the Los Angeles basin, it's double trouble.

The study of more than 3,600 children in 12 Central and Southern California communities found that the greatest damage is in the small airways of the lungs, and the damage has been linked to the fine particles that come out of tailpipes.

The same study previously found that smog stunts lung growth, and living close to freeways can increase a child's risk of developing asthma.

With this new information, why would developers continue to build — and people still buy — homes so close to freeways? Because there is an estimated shortage of 130,000 homes in California that increases by about 40,000 homes annually.

The lead author of the unhealthy air study, W. James Gauderman, an epidemiologist at USC's Keck School of Medicine, urges local governments to consider his findings when planning neighborhoods and communities.

For the sake of generations of children to come, that's the least that should be done.

[Guest Commentary, Washington Post, Monday, May 21, 2007:](#)

Lead or Step Aside, EPA

States Can't Wait on Global Warming

By Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jodi Rell

It's bad enough that the federal government has yet to take the threat of global warming seriously, but it borders on malfeasance for it to block the efforts of states such as California and Connecticut that are trying to protect the public's health and welfare.

California, Connecticut and 10 other states are poised to enact tailpipe emissions standards -- tougher than existing federal requirements -- that would cut greenhouse gas emissions from cars, light trucks and sport-utility vehicles by 392 million metric tons by the year 2020, the equivalent to taking 74 million of today's cars off the road for an entire year.

Since transportation accounts for one-third of America's greenhouse gas emissions, enacting these standards would be a huge step forward in our efforts to clean the environment and would show the rest of the world that our nation is serious about fighting global warming.

Yet for the past 16 months, the Environmental Protection Agency has refused to give us permission to do so.

Even after the Supreme Court ruled in our favor last month, the federal government continues to stand in our way.

Another discouraging sign came just last week, when President Bush issued an executive order to give federal agencies until the end of 2008 to continue studying the threat of greenhouse gas emissions and determine what can be done about them.

To us, that again sounds like more of the same inaction and denial, and it is unconscionable.

Under the Clean Air Act, California has the right to enact its own air pollution standards, which other states may then follow, as long as the EPA grants California a waiver. The waiver gives California, and other states, formal permission to deviate from federal standards. California has requested more than 40 such waivers over the past 30 years and has been granted full or partial permission for most of them.

By continuing to stonewall California's request, the federal government is blocking the will of tens of millions of people in California, Connecticut and other states who want their government to take real action on global warming.

The EPA is finally holding the first of two hearings on the waiver request tomorrow, and we welcome the opportunity to call attention to the harmful effects that global warming is having on people and the environment.

But we are far from convinced that the agency intends to follow the law and grant us our waiver.

If it fails to do so, we have an obligation to take legal action and settle this issue once and for all.

The threat is real. Scientists tell us that if nothing is done to stop the warming of Earth's atmosphere, we can expect an increasing number of droughts, greater risk of forest fires, a

reduction in our snowpack, an increase in sea levels, more flooding in winter and hotter temperatures in summer.

There can be little debate anymore on whether the effects of climate change constitute a looming threat to the public's health and welfare.

Republicans and Democrats in statehouses around the country have already spoken loudly that federal inaction on climate change is unacceptable and have acted on their own initiative.

Whether it is Northeastern states uniting to reduce greenhouse gases from electric generators or Western states looking to reduce emissions throughout the economy, momentum is building everywhere but in Washington. The federal government should not stand in the way of dealing with the most serious environmental challenge facing the world.

While the United States represents just 5 percent of the world's population, it produces 25 percent of the world's greenhouse gases.

With the landmark legislation authored by former assemblywoman Fran Pavley and passed in 2002, California demonstrated that it is serious about cutting down these emissions from cars. Connecticut also has a strong record on greenhouse gas reduction, which includes adoption of California's tough standards for vehicle tailpipe emissions.

California, Connecticut and a host of like-minded states are proving that you can protect the environment and the economy simultaneously.

It's high time the federal government becomes our partner or gets out of the way.

Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, is governor of California. Jodi Rell, a Republican, is governor of Connecticut.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Monday, May 21, 2007:](#)

Fuel efficiency woes

United States still lags in auto fuel economy.

The United States is last in the industrialized world when it comes to auto fuel efficiency. In this country of innovation, we're behind Japan, Europe, China, Australia and Canada.

This matters, a lot. For every gallon of gas burned, a car produces about 20 pounds of carbon dioxide. Rising concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere contribute to global warming. The United States is the world's largest emitter of carbon dioxide.

So if Americans want to be serious about reducing carbon dioxide emissions, we need to get serious about improving the fuel efficiency of our cars.

While fuel economy standards in the United States have remained flat, the rest of the industrialized world has taken action. In Japan, cars are required to get more than 45 miles per gallon. In Europe, more than 40 mpg. China, Australia and Canada, more than 30 mpg.

The United States? For cars, 27.5 mpg (unchanged since 1985) and for light trucks (pickups, minivans, and sport utility vehicles), 22.2 mpg. Last March, the Bush administration ordered a paltry mileage increase by 2010 in the light truck standard, from 22.2 mpg to 23.5 mpg.

No wonder Ford, General Motors and Chrysler suffer in competition with Toyota and Honda. A 2006 Honda Civic Hybrid gets nearly 50 mpg; a 2006 Ford Focus (one of Detroit's best for fuel efficiency) gets 29 mpg.

Bush signed an executive order Monday directing agencies to work together on a proposal to achieve a 20% reduction in gasoline use by 2017. This would be the equivalent of a 34 mpg

standard. Yet Bush evaded questions about whether new fuel efficiency standards would actually emerge from this work.

This is too little, too late.

No wonder California and 11 other states went to court to get the new 23.5 mpg standard for pickups, minivans and SUVs overturned. They want the Bush administration, in the words of California Attorney General Jerry Brown, to "junk the token 1-mile-per gallon increase in fuel efficiency standards and propose something real."

This is fitting. California has a long record of leading the nation in regulating auto emissions. And in 2002, California lawmakers passed a law phasing in new emissions standards -- producing the equivalent of 43.4 mpg by 2016 (which would still be less stringent than European standards, set at the equivalent of more than 50 mpg by 2012). Unfortunately, California's law is tied up in court with an auto industry lawsuit.

The least that Bush and Congress could do is get behind solutions that would narrow the gap between U.S. and European standards. Under the Bush proposal, we'd still be dead last in the industrialized world a decade from now.

[Merced Sun-Star, Editorial, Monday, May 21, 2007:](#)

Our View: U.S. needs better fuel efficiency

We lag behind other industrialized world powers when it comes to raising car standards

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[Sacramento Bee, Editorial, Monday, May 21, 2007](#)

Editorial: Budget bludgeon

Governor takes selective aim at spending

California's unbalanced budget is red and getting redder in part because it is on autopilot. Spending formulas for education, local government and transportation are among the big drivers of the structural budget problems.

In the past, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has either failed in attempts to reform these formulas (education) or cemented them into place via constitutional amendments (local government and transportation). The governor has revisited the formula issue, which would be good news if he was serious about an effort at distributing public funds for the highest public good. But he sadly is not.

In his new 2006-07 budget proposal, Schwarzenegger is selectively targeting the poor, the disabled, the mentally ill, transit users and farmers who are trying to preserve their land. While a state budget with fewer spending formulas is the right overall goal, it is wrong to take aim at some vulnerable populations while leaving some powerful interests untouched. It isn't budget reform. It's budget regression.

Here are some programs Schwarzenegger is targeting -- priorities that lawmakers need to protect:

Homeless mentally ill

Schwarzenegger wants to eliminate a program, in place since 2000, that provides treatment and housing programs for homeless people who are mentally ill.

This program, the result of two bills authored by Sen. Darrell Steinberg of Sacramento, has been highly successful. Some 5,000 people have been helped off the street because of its services. In Sacramento County, it helps about 300 people a year.

Schwarzenegger wants to use the program's \$55 million for other purposes, saying the services can be backfilled with funds from Proposition 63, which voters approved in 2004. Yet Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act, was intended to supplement existing programs for the homeless, not replace them. The language of the initiative made this clear. Schwarzenegger is flouting the will of the voters by raiding funds intended to help some of the most vulnerable among us.

Redirecting transit funds

Transit agencies in Sacramento and elsewhere were anticipating increased funding this year, and for good reason. In times of high gas prices (and thus, higher gas tax revenues), state law requires so-called "spillover" revenues to be placed in a public transit account. The idea is to help cover operating costs during periods when transit tends to be in high demand, as it is now.

Schwarzenegger, hardly a big fan of transit, instead proposes to redirect \$1.3 billion of these funds for other purposes, including school bus funding. The Legislative Analyst questions if this maneuver is legal. It may well be. It is certainly bad policy.

If the governor wants to [fight global warming](#), [reduce air pollution](#) and help people on welfare find jobs, he has to maximize support for transit. State funding is just a small part of the transit pie, but it is an important one.

Children on welfare

Schwarzenegger, in the name of welfare reform, wants to end cash payments to help support 200,000 children whose parents are part of the state's welfare-to-work program, also known as Cal-WORKS. Savings next year: \$315 million.

The governor contends these cutbacks will help the state close its structural deficit and also encourage more adult welfare recipients to find work, as federal law requires.

Research nationwide, however, suggests a full cutoff of child payments is not necessary to encourage parents to find work. Partial sanctions can often produce the desired effect -- without the threat of hurting thousands of children and families, possibly leading to more homelessness.

To top it off, Schwarzenegger proposes to freeze Cal-WORKS grants (saving \$123 million) and withhold a 2003 cost-of-living increase for program recipients -- the subject of an ongoing lawsuit. Whether or not the administration prevails in court (saving \$550 million), he is controlling costs on the backs of the poor, a lousy way to fight spending formulas.

Saving farmland

For years, the state has spent roughly \$39 million a year to help preserve more than 15 million acres of farmland and ranch land that might otherwise be developed.

Known as the Williamson Act, the program allows willing farmers to get a break on their property taxes if they don't turn their land into subdivisions. The state then reimburses counties for the lost tax revenue as incentive for them to support the program.

The Williamson Act is not without flaws, but it doesn't deserve to be plowed under. Schwarzenegger wants to use the \$39 million to plug his budget hole -- gaining a blip of savings at the cost of more sprawl and lost ranch land.

Gov. Gray Davis tried this trick back in 2002 and 2003. This sure looks like Susan Kennedy -- Schwarzenegger's chief of staff and Davis' Cabinet secretary -- is once again wielding this old scythe. She should put it away. The beautiful oak woodlands of eastern Sacramento County benefit from the Williamson Act. So does every Californian who cares about saving farms and open space for future generations.

[Stockton Record, Letter to the Editor, Sunday, May 20, 2007](#)

City planners need a better plan

With a 6-1 vote against a ban on more big-box stores, members of the Stockton Planning Commission squandered an opportunity to demonstrate any capability to process clear and concise information.

If the majority of commissioners truly felt they "did not have enough information" to make a decision, how could they possibly reject the proposed ordinance?

They should have admitted their ignorance and inability to process the staff report and clear presentation by Phillip King, plus whatever information they were able to collect on the Internet while spending a few moments preparing for the meeting.

They could have given city staff members definitive instructions on how to fill the gaps in their ignorance. They should have tabled the ordinance and adjourned the meeting, perhaps with a resolution to educate themselves and do their homework.

Instead, they voted for blight and urban decay. They supported killing the economic viability of neighborhood shopping and destroying any hope for downtown development.

They supported consolidating consumer grocery sales to a single corporation and moving the majority of economic activity to the fringes of the suburban areas.

This forces people into their vehicles for trips of four to six miles instead of less than a mile. The profits flow to one family in Arkansas.

Wal-Mart spokesman Aaron J. Rios said "consumers should decide what type of stores they want to shop at, not government."

Residents of a city should decide what kind of city they want, not just what kind of stores they want.

If residents and voters decide they want beautiful communities, their planners should help create beautiful communities.

If the planners did their job, this area would have a variety of vibrant and successful retail centers.

They seem ignorant of the effects of traffic congestion and air pollution, and their votes support the destruction of planned neighborhood shopping areas.

They rejected the concept of community-owned businesses and consumer merchandise offered in attractive stores - with a range of quality and price - in local shopping districts.

Maybe these planners just don't care about Stockton. In that case, they should be replaced with civic-minded people who can process the complex information that intelligent execution of their duties requires.

These folks don't seem like they're up to the task.

Jay Hislop - Stockton

[Fresno Bee editorial, Sunday, May 20, 2007:](#)

**Metro Rural Loop is a chance to act regionally
Concept has much promise, deserves close examination.**

The people now working to pull together the concept known as the Metro Rural Loop are asking a lot of fundamental questions: What will this region look like in 50 years? A hundred years? What do we want it to look like? How many of us will there be? Will we still have a thriving agricultural sector in our economy? Will we have development that can fill our needs without filling the entire countryside?

The loop concept envisions corridors running like a big wheel in a wide circle around the metropolitan Fresno-Clovis area, connected by spokes along the existing Freeways 41, 168 and 180. The transportation corridors would be "multi-modal," which is planner-speak for having lots of choices: roads, rails, buses, trails and bike lanes, all running through the wheel and spokes.

The people involved in the loop think we can find good answers to all those questions, and we hope they're right. Much is riding on the decisions we make about transportation, housing, economic development and environmental concerns in the next few years.

It's important to have this discussion now, because, as one participant put it, "The stars have aligned" for an effort to come up with new ideas for the future. The region still has an opportunity to redefine itself before turning into a smoggier version of the San Fernando Valley. "The canvas is still white," said another participant.

It won't stay that way forever. The San Joaquin Valley's population is around 3.3 million now; that's expected to double by 2050.

We can't handle that growth using our current piecemeal approach, under which local governments usually make planning decisions as if they lived in a vacuum. We must have a regional plan in place before that growth smothers us.

That's the great promise of the Metro Rural Loop. The boards of supervisors in both Fresno and Madera counties and the governments of the 17 cities in the two counties have already joined the process.

That's unprecedented, and it gives us great hope that a sense of regionalism is growing.

We have to have that. Most of our problems don't stop at city boundaries and county lines. We're all in this together, from one end of the Valley to the other, and the sooner we realize that -- and begin to plan on that basis -- the better our chances of successfully handling what lies ahead.

There aren't many specifics yet on the loop concept; that also lies ahead. But it's a promising effort that could pay dividends well beyond the implementation of the "smart growth" philosophy that is its philosophical underpinning. We need this kind of thinking in the Valley. We have the resources, human and otherwise, for a bright future. All we really need is a good plan. We hope that emerges from the Metro Rural Loop debate.

[Fresno Bee commentary, Sunday May 20, 2007:](#)

In the loop

Designers toil now to map out the best routes to work for your great-grandkids.

By Russ Minick

Foresight is not a great strength for most of us. We rarely look years ahead and ask ourselves, "What will our lives be like 20, 50, 100 years from now?"

We pay a price for that shortcoming. As individuals, we wake up one day and realize that retirement is just around the corner -- and that we haven't prepared for it. As communities, we realize one day that the models we have relied upon for years to build our neighborhoods and cities -- once taken for granted -- no longer work well. We scratch our heads and try to make the best of it.

But occasionally -- very occasionally -- some among us will look past the end of the work week, or the end of the current quarter, or the school year, and try to envision a different future. And sometimes, they try to do something about it before it arrives, unexpected and frequently unpleasant.

That's what's going on with the Metro Rural Loop, a concept that's beginning to get attention from elected leaders, city planners and members of the business community. Most of this week's Vision section is devoted to a discussion of this idea and what it means for the people of Fresno and Madera counties, today and 100 years from now.

The idea is to create -- beginning right away -- transportation corridors in a wide loop that will connect all the cities of the two counties, with "spokes" crisscrossing to connect to the "wheel." Urban development will be confined to those corridors, and they will include a wide array of

transportation alternatives, including roads and highways, dedicated bus lanes, light rail and other mass transit, bike lanes and walking trails.

The areas in between the developed corridors will remain in agricultural production, thus preserving the region's principal economic activity.

The idea is short on specifics, in part by design. It will be influenced as time passes by new technologies and changing political realities, and it's important that it be a framework for the future rather than a rigid set of strictures placed on generations to come.

But some of the possibilities are already clear. Denser urban environments, in addition to preserving ag lands, will mean more efficient transportation, reducing congestion and improving air quality. The area would be able to grow into a significant urban region while keeping natural lands open for all manner of uses. That's crucial: Pastoral places are most important to those who live in dense cities. The intense lifestyles of dense urban environments may be exciting to many, but the pressures they create make it even more imperative to get out and sit under a tree from time to time. And we all have to eat.

Some will see this as a recipe for urban homogenization, squeezing the life out of unique communities and robbing us of choices. It's much more likely to work the other way. If better, faster and cleaner transportation systems are available, people will be more free, not less, to work where they wish and live where they wish. That allows for individual communities to share a sense of purpose in a regional framework that unites everyone in a larger milieu.

That regional perspective may be the best thing about the growing discussion about the Metro Rural Loop. All 17 cities in the two counties, and the county governments themselves, have signed onto the process and have representatives participating in the discussion. So have farmland preservation people, such as the American Farmland Trust, and members of the development industry. Farmers are represented, and a wide array of others.

That's crucial. John Wright, Clovis' planning director, speaks of the need to design a "long-range, urban-form metro area" that is coherent as a region, and "not done by default" in a piecemeal fashion. Keith Bergthold, assistant planning director for Fresno and a driving force behind the loop concept, says that over the "last 50 years, cities are not the economic unit -- it's the region." He speaks of the Metro Rural Loop idea as giving us "permission to speak regionally."

That makes abundant sense. The issues we face are rarely confined to one neighborhood or one city. Transportation is a regional issue. So are water availability and air quality. Economic development is -- or should be -- a regional issue. "It's not a zero-sum game," said Clovis' Wright.

If we improve air quality, we improve it for all of us. Similarly, if good new jobs are created in Madera, that's good for Fresno. If the same thing happens in Reedley, that's good for Clovis. We are neither defined nor limited by the artificial lines on maps that separate us into all these different jurisdictions.

How we got to where we are is instructional. Cities began to sprawl almost as soon as World War II ended. Returning GI's had given much to their country, and they wanted families, jobs and homes upon their return -- and right away. The Baby Boom is evidence that they got the first. The postwar economic boom provided the jobs, and the GI Bill paid for the training to do those jobs. The returning veterans found their homes in the suburbs.

The suburbs were born to alleviate a severe housing crisis. The techniques of the assembly line, which worked so well cranking out the implements of victory, were applied to vast tracts of cheap land at the edges of existing cities, and houses sprang up everywhere, it seemed.

The whole thing was stitched together by the automobile.

It made a great deal of sense then. Today, increasingly, it doesn't work. The sprawl kept advancing outward, so that we now speak of "first-ring suburbs," those postwar developments, which are now closer to the original city cores than the newer, more distant "edge cities," as journalist and author Joel Garreau calls them in his book, "Edge City: Life on the New Frontier."

Congestion and pollution are the result. So is alienation. Peter Calthorpe and William Fulton, in their book "The Regional City," put it this way: "We are becoming socially more segregated -- now by interest, access and geography as well as income, age and race."

And we are further segregating ourselves even in our isolated communities. Calthorpe and Fulton again: "Even within the more highly segregated developments of today, there is less common ground, less civic space to bring even their homogenous populations together. We leave home in a car and travel to remote workplaces. Without the simple act of walking in our neighborhoods or having something of a common destination, it is little wonder that we know our neighbors less and less. We communicate on the Internet but not on the street."

Not everyone will like what they see in the Metro Rural Loop. Environmentalists and conservationists, among others, are sure to be aghast at the idea of upgrading Highway 65, along the east side of the Valley, into a freeway -- even a freeway of the future. And others will cling to the postwar dream of the detached single-family residence in the suburbs.

But many will seize the opportunity. Fresno-area builder Kevin Castanos, an active participant in the loop discussion, says "the bias against [higher] densities will vanish" over time. Castanos adds: "Creating a plan for our whole region -- that's the most important work in our lifetime."

And it's work that needs to begin right away. To that end, the group examining the Metro Rural Loop has won a grant from the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, the agency set up by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to boost this region's future. The grant will fund feasibility studies.

This discussion has begun at precisely the right time. James Hallowell, the local businessman and philanthropist -- and backer of the loop effort -- put it this way: "It's now or never." We still have time to plan a prosperous region that is also coherent, clean and eminently livable. If we don't create a regional plan that looks out a century ahead, we may be condemning our children, and theirs, to a very bleak landscape.

Russ Minick is The Bee's deputy editorial page editor.

[Fresno Bee commentary, Sunday, May 20, 2007:](#)

AL SMITH: It's not too early to plan future for the next century

Imagination is a powerful word. It can be used to experience great extremes -- from love and happiness to fear and chaos. The use of imagination allows the mind to preview experiences that might be.

So let's stop a minute and use our imagination to preview what our community will look like 100 years from now.

Recently in The Bee, the state Department of Finance reported that the Valley is outpacing the rest of California in population growth. At the same time, the city of Fresno recorded its highest growth rate since 1992.

They are also telling us that within the next 100 years the Fresno-Madera area could have as many as 5 to 6 million residents. Imagine that -- seven or eight times as many people living here than we have today.

I use to think that 100 years was a long time. Of course, that was before I hit that magic retirement age. As it relates to land use, 100 years goes by very quickly -- like it's just around the corner.

Because of transportation requirements, this huge explosion of population will bring an increase of pollution to our air and massive gridlock that we have come to associate with a large number of automobiles, all vying for limited space on congested roadways.

Add to that urban sprawl -- the destruction of precious farmland and natural resources and a continuation of concentrated poverty -- and one can see that "Houston, we have a problem."

If we are going to have 5 to 6 million people traveling our roads and highways in the next 100 years, we better begin planning for it now. When you combine the challenge with the complexities of accomplishing things in government time, needless to say, "time is a-wastin'."

In spite of all of the competence of our recently constructed freeways, what we have today will not even be close to adequate for the growth that we can expect.

So we have a lot to consider as we imagine our community of tomorrow.

One method that has recently been offered for this transportation dilemma is a project called the Metro Rural Loop.

This "loop" would basically surround the central Fresno area with modern, clean highways that would create convenient access to most of the areas of population concentration -- basically connecting 15-17 local cities that are in Fresno and Madera counties.

The Metro Rural Loop is not a unique concept. In many major metropolitan cities, experts have found it efficient to create what they call the "spoke and wheel" concept of moving people, along with goods and services, around large metropolitan areas. One only has to look to Atlanta, Los Angeles or Chicago to find successful examples of this idea.

Our spoke-and wheel would allow the for the expansion of Highways 99, 41, 180, and 168 and extending state Route 65 on the east side of the Valley and state Route 145 on the west.

In addition to automobiles, these corridors could include light rail, express lanes for vehicles and, where needed, routes that could be used for bus rapid transit. Bus rapid transit achieves most of the public transit benefits of light rail, but offers it at a lower cost and more flexibility, thus allowing it to be customized to a community's current needs and modified for the future.

Here is just one example of what the Metro Rural Loop would create:

Let's say that today we attempt to travel from downtown Reedley to downtown Clovis. According to MapQuest, we would drive more than 33 miles of surface streets and it would take a little under an hour.

Utilizing the spoke-and-wheel concept, that same drive would cut the travel time almost in half, producing fewer starts and stops, fewer miles driven, less pollution and, of course, less fuel expense.

This Reedley-to-Clovis example is just one of many examples the Metro Rural Loop concept would allow to make transportation more efficient.

The Metro Rural Loop is a comprehensive initiative that will need regional collaboration of local governments and private entities. Included must be the counties of Fresno and Madera, along with the 17 local cities.

If we digest all these numbers -- 5 to 6 million people, 100 years and our current transportation corridors -- we realize we had better begin addressing the problem now.

I "imagine" it's time to start.

Al Smith is president and chief executive officer of the Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Saturday, May 19, 2007:](#)

New voices for air board

Maybe governing body will begin to make better decisions.

The state Senate has approved a bill that would alter the makeup of the Valley air district's governing board -- and none too soon, it appears.

The passage of Senate Bill 719 Thursday, on a 26-12 vote, coincided with the decision of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board to relax a ban on open field burning enacted by the Legislature in 2003.

The board decided that meeting the terms of the law was just too onerous for Valley farmers, who have aggressively fought regulation of their polluting practices since the effort to clean up the Valley's foul air began.

The district will now allow some ag burning to continue until 2010. The air board concluded that the cost of meeting the ban is simply too costly for many Valley farmers.

Perhaps, but the cost of dirty air -- estimated at more than \$3 billion annually in increased health costs alone -- is pretty onerous to all the people who live in the Valley.

The decision to permit continued open field burning is hardly a surprise. The air district board, dominated by supervisors from the eight counties that make up the district, has struggled to find a passion for clean air that matches their enthusiasm for supporting the practices of the most influential special interest in their counties.

On April 30, the air board accepted a controversial staff recommendation to postpone full cleanup of the Valley air until 2024, some 11 years after the current deadline. That move was widely supported by the ag industry and other business interests, and vehemently opposed by the medical community, environmentalists and an array of civic activists.

Now it appears that delay is fast becoming the modus operandi of this board.

That might change if the expansion envisioned under SB 719 takes effect. The bill would add four members to the board, bringing the total to 15. Two new members would represent the large cities in the air district. The other two would be required to have medical or scientific experience in the effects of air pollution on health. They would be appointed by the governor.

That's raised the hackles of the air board's supporters. They complain that "local control" would be sacrificed to Sacramento "bureaucrats." That's hard to swallow, since the experts appointed by the governor would have to be Valley residents.

In most cases, we might agree with the argument for "local control." But in this case, "local control" has become a euphemism for "maintain the status quo." And the status quo means more delay, more years of breathing bad air, more kids with asthma, more premature deaths, more economic loss because of air pollution.

Better to bring in some new voices, open up the process and inject a little of the urgency now missing from the air board's efforts. Continued delay is more than simply frustrating. It's deadly.