

Spare the air

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, July 5, 2007

A Spare the Air day has been declared for today in Kern County.

Spare the Air days are called when air quality is expected to be unhealthy.

The designation is made by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, the agency that regulates air quality in the San Joaquin Valley.

On these days, residents in affected areas should limit outdoor activity, especially between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m., when smog levels are the highest.

Ozone, the main component of smog, can aggravate respiratory problems and trigger asthma attacks. Children, the elderly and people with respiratory conditions are especially vulnerable, but when ozone reaches high levels, everyone is at risk.

Typically, 20 to 40 Spare the Air days are called from June through September, the smog season.

Residents are also encouraged to help reduce the level of harmful emissions going into the air on Spare the Air days. Some ideas suggested by the air district include:

- * Carpooling, taking public transportation or walking or biking instead of driving.
- * Trip-linking (doing all your errands at one time).
- * Not using gas-powered lawn equipment.
- * Using electric briquette igniters instead of lighter fluid.
- * Using water-based paints and solvents instead of oil-based products.

Daily Spare the Air forecasts can be found on the air district's Web site at www.valleyair.org or by calling 800-SMOG-INFO. The information will also be published on *The Californian's* weather page.

'Green' is good, but are efforts enough for Valley air?

By Alex Breitler, Record Staff Writer

Stockton Record, Thursday, July 5, 2007

Government agencies that buy low-emission vehicles and lean toward "green" contractors might help the San Joaquin Valley clean up its air faster than anticipated.

Some cities are already moving toward hybrid fleets or buses that run on compressed natural gas. But with so many more private vehicles on the road, it's unclear how big of a difference these efforts will make.

"The emissions reductions are pretty modest, but it does show to the world that (agencies) are doing something about this and so should you," said Diane Bailey, a scientist with the conservation group Natural Resources Defense Council.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District recently approved a plan that gives the region more time to meet federal ozone standards. Officials said that even if money was no object, they couldn't possibly meet the rule on time and the region could lose billions in federal transportation dollars.

Environmentalists protested, saying the extension would expose families to dirty air for longer than necessary.

But the district's plan does contain a "black box" - a set of strategies that district officials say could help achieve the ozone standard prior to the new deadline of 2024. Among those is one that encourages the government to clean up its own vehicles.

Fleet transitions in this area include:

» San Joaquin County received two federal grants to help pay for 137 hybrid cars through 2011. That amounts to nearly 20 percent of the county fleet.

Public works business administrator Roger Janes said this effort began as early as 1990 with the acquisition of cars that run on natural gas. The hybrid cars offer better fuel economy and more kick, Janes said.

"We need to be moving in that direction," he said.

» About 5 percent of Stockton's 705 city vehicles are "ultra low-emission" - hybrid, electric or natural gas, Deputy City Manager Christine Tien told the City Council last week.

» Lodi has 27 buses running on natural gas, along with dump trucks, sweepers and public works vehicles.

» Manteca has several electric vehicles used by meter readers, and one hybrid car in a fleet of 200 to 300, said Michael Brinton, the city's director of public works.

The transition is slowed by yearly budget constraints, Brinton said. "We do want to be as environmentally friendly as we can," he said.

» Lathrop has no hybrids but will consider buying them as soon as 2008, said Cary Keaton, public works director.

» Caltrans' local district, which spans eight counties, has 185 low-emission light-duty vehicles out of a fleet of 450, a spokeswoman said.

As for considering "green" contractors, Stockton says it encourages developers to build new subdivisions with narrower streets and wider sidewalks to encourage bike riding and walking.

Valleywide, a contentious new rule already requires developers to pay for the pollution that indirectly results from their projects - such as cars driving to their new shopping mall.

It's not clear what the district's green contracting goal would add to emissions reductions, observers said

"I would prefer to see something more concrete," the NRDC's Bailey said.

Jaime Holt, a spokeswoman for the Valley air district, said everything in the ozone plan must be quantifiable by the federal government.

"The district believes that we put everything and the kitchen sink into that ozone plan that would be legally allowable," Holt said. The black box strategies will require "everybody buying into them" to improve the air sooner, she said.

The black box also calls for upgrading of private vehicle fleets, transporting more goods by sea to decrease truck traffic in the Valley and using a proposed high-speed rail line to accomplish the same purpose.

Staunch environmentalist to head air quality agency

Governor's appointee may bring credibility to state's emissions plan

By Steven Harmon, MEDIANEWS SACRAMENTO BUREAU

Tri-Valley Herald, Thursday, July 5, 2007

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Tuesday named a staunch environmentalist with deep Democratic ties to take the helm of the state's air quality enforcement agency, perhaps dulling criticism that he was stalling implementation of California's landmark global warming legislation as a way to appease the business community.

His selection of environmental lawyer Mary Nichols, a former appointee of two former Democratic governors and President Clinton, won wide praise from business and environmental groups alike for her even-handed approach to air quality.

It also took some heat off of Schwarzenegger, who a week ago fired the board's chairman, Robert Sawyer, after Sawyer pushed more aggressively on pollution curbs than the administration could abide. The firing set off a firestorm of criticism from Democrats and environmentalists, who said he was doing the bidding of business by urging a go-slow approach to implementing AB32 — the greenhouse gas reduction law Schwarzenegger has touted around the world.

Schwarzenegger called Nichols a "real powerhouse" player in the environmental movement who will bring credibility to his plan to reduce emissions through a mixture of air quality standards and market-based incentives.

"She was unafraid to make bold decisions," Schwarzenegger said in introducing her, "and was fearless in introducing new technologies to get past old excuses to clean up our air."

Nichols, 62, has served as director of the University of California, Los Angeles Institute of the Environment since 2004. She was appointed by Gov. Jerry Brown to chair the air resources board from 1978-1983, leading the state's effort to ban lead in gasoline and requiring catalytic converters in automobiles.

"I can't resist this: I'm back," said Nichols, a longtime environmental lawyer. "One of the messages I got very clearly in my interviews with the governor is that he expects me to reach out to all of the affected communities in the state."

Nichols served as the secretary of the California Resources Agency from 1999 to 2003 under Gov. Gray Davis. Before that, she served as assistant administrator for Air and Radiation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under Clinton.

As an environmental lawyer for the Center for Law in the Public Interest, she initiated some of the first test cases under the Federal Clean Air Act and the state's air quality laws. She worked as a senior staff attorney for the Natural Resource Defense Council and headed the Environment Now Foundation.

Ann Notthoff, the California advocacy director for the Natural Resources Defense Council, called her an "enforcer and advocate for a healthy environment and public health" who knows the air resources board well and "is committed to its science-based independence. It would be hard to find a stronger chair of the board."

Businesses who have expressed fears that strict air emission standards could be ruinous were hopeful that Nichols will balance the need for a strong economy and environmental protection.

"She has worked to bring environmentalists and industry together," said Alan Zaremborg, president of CalChamber, "to balance and achieve these twin goals."

Democrats said they were pleased with the selection, but warned that she will have to show that she is willing to enforce tough new emissions standards as the board begins to implement AB32. She will face a confirmation hearing next week in the Senate.

Schwarzenegger has stated he wants AB32 to feature a cap-and-trade policy in which companies that don't meet air quality standards are able to purchase permits from those who do. Democrats say the law requires the state to take "early action" measures before cap-and-trade options are offered to businesses.

"The Senate will determine the extent to which she is both knowledgeable about the law and the law's emphasis on strong regulation over market mechanisms," said Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, D-Oakland, in a letter to the governor.

The appointment "helps repair some of the recent damage" from Sawyer's firing, said Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez, D-Los Angeles. But he is moving ahead with plans to call on Sawyer and Catherine Witherspoon, the former executive director who resigned in the wake of Sawyer's firing, to describe at a Friday hearing what critics have called unprecedented meddling by the Schwarzenegger administration.

Witherspoon, from her home a day after she resigned, lauded the appointment as a "perfect" choice.

"I've watched her from a distance and thought she was a forceful personality, a straight shooter and an outstanding lawyer," said Witherspoon, who was first hired at the air resources board by Nichols in 1981. "The only issue is if the governor meant what he said that he's going to let her do her job."

Governor taps Democratic veteran for air-quality board

By Michael Gardner - COPLEY NEWS SERVICE
SanDiego Union Tribune, Thursday, July 5, 2007

SACRAMENTO – Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger moved yesterday to mute outrage over his decision to fire the state's top air-quality regulator by bringing in an environmentalist with an unmistakably green résumé.

Mary Nichols, the new Air Resources Board chairwoman, is returning to familiar ground. She served in that role from 1978 to 1983, under then-Gov. Jerry Brown, a Democrat.

In the post, she helped pioneer landmark pollution initiatives, including a ban on leaded gasoline and requiring catalytic converters on vehicles.

"She was unafraid and made bold decisions," Schwarzenegger said.

She also served as environmental adviser in the Democratic administrations of former Gov. Gray Davis and President Clinton. Her most recent post has been director of the Institute of the Environment at the University of California Los Angeles.

Schwarzenegger, a Republican, has once again reached into a pool of administrators who served under Davis by tapping the former governor's environmental czar. The choice was widely applauded, from the California Chamber of Commerce to the state's most powerful environmental groups.

However, top Schwarzenegger aides are under scrutiny for their role in the removal of Bob Sawyer, whom Nichols will replace. Environmental groups were furious over the ouster and subsequent resignation of the board's executive officer, Catherine Witherspoon.

Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez, D-Los Angeles, is demanding that some of Schwarzenegger's inner circle appear at a hearing Friday.

The governor said he will refuse to make his top team available for the hearing, but he offered to meet with Núñez and others in his office out of public view. The Legislature could subpoena the aides.

Schwarzenegger rocked the air-quality agency Thursday when he ousted the highly respected Sawyer for failing to strictly follow administration positions. The removal was reportedly orchestrated by Susan Kennedy, the governor's chief of staff. Witherspoon then quit Sunday,

saying administration aides were meddling; others said the move tarnished the governor's image as a leader in the campaign against global warming.

Kennedy and Nichols were once close allies in the Davis administration. Kennedy was Davis' deputy chief of staff; Nichols was resources secretary.

Nichols candidly supports business-backed incentives to reduce greenhouse gases, called a market-based cap-and-trade system, and signaled she would follow the governor's lead on most issues.

Senate President Pro Tempore Don Perata, D-Oakland, has also scheduled a hearing on Nichols, saying he wants to determine whether she can act independently of the administration.

One question lawmakers may also delve into is why Witherspoon's computer mysteriously stopped working over the weekend. She said computer technicians concluded after several hours of trying to get it to work that someone must have tampered with it.

Democrats say they will ask for the computer to be turned over as part of their investigation.

EPA smog plan doesn't satisfy industry or activists

By Tracy Watson

USA TODAY, Thursday, July 5, 2007

Environmental groups and industry groups reacted coolly Thursday, though for different reasons, to a proposal to cut the level of smog allowed in the USA's air.

The Environmental Protection Agency announced a plan to reduce the smog limit by 11% to 17%. It left open the possibility that the final smog limit could be stricter than what it proposed or not changed at all. The EPA asked for public comment on limits for 90 days. A final standard should be reached by March 2008.

Environmentalists were disappointed and protested the proposal's suggestion that the EPA might retain the current limit rather than setting a tighter one.

"That's an outrageous idea, driven by politics instead of science," said Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch, an environmental group.

Industry groups were disappointed that the EPA even proposed to tighten the smog limit. They noted many communities haven't met the current limit of 84 parts of smog per billion parts of air, set in 1997.

The EPA says 104 counties, mostly in California and the Northeast, have smog levels that don't meet current limits. If the EPA proposal becomes final, 533 counties would violate smog levels. There are more than 3,100 counties in the USA.

"Even though a lot has been done and spent, there is still a long way to go to meeting the current standard," said John Engler, president of the National Association of Manufacturers. "Therefore, we see no reason to revise the current standard."

The EPA allows communities leeway in how to meet smog limits. To reach the current standard, communities have proposed measures such as limiting emissions from factories and adding pollution controls to diesel trucks. They could adopt similar steps to meet a more stringent limit.

Smog forms from pollutants released by factories, cars and coal-burning power plants. Sunlight powers the chemical reactions that create smog, which is why smog is usually worst in the summer.

Scientific studies have tied higher smog levels to higher numbers of emergency-room visits and hospital admissions, according to the EPA. Breathing smog exacerbates asthma and raises the risk of death, the agency said.

EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson emphasized that by his reading of the science, the current limit does not protect public health. "I do not believe that there is scientific justification for retaining the current standard," Johnson said Thursday. "I recognize that others don't agree with that, and so I want to provide an opportunity ... to provide comments."

Johnson's final ruling, due in March, will probably attract criticism no matter what he decides.

An independent scientific panel that advises the EPA unanimously recommended last year that the smog limit be tightened more than what was proposed Thursday.

Representatives of the auto, chemical and other industries have visited the White House in the past month to make their case, according to the Office of Management and Budget.

"It's clear the administrator is facing a lot of pressure on both sides," said Jeffrey Holmstead, the former EPA chief of air pollution, now an attorney at Bracewell & Giuliani. "They're tried to stake out something in the middle."

EPA offers plan to alter mower emissions

By Erica Werner, Associated Press Writer
USA Today, Thursday, July 5, 2007

WASHINGTON — Those polluting engine-powered mowers that are a staple of suburban lawn care would become much cleaner under emission limits proposed Tuesday.

The regulators' proposal follows a long-running dispute between California Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Missouri Republican Sen. Kit Bond, who has sought to block the change in order to protect a small-engine maker in his home state, Briggs & Stratton Corp.

Walk-behind and riding mowers and other garden equipment account for up to 10 percent of summertime smog-forming emissions from mobile sources in some parts of the country.

The Environmental Protection Agency's new proposal applies to engines under 25 horsepower, which power nearly all walk-behind and riding lawnmowers as well as small generators and other devices. The rule would cut smog-forming emissions from the engines by 35 percent; the reductions would probably be accomplished by adding catalytic converters that reduce pollution from exhaust.

The rule would take effect in 2011 for riding mowers and 2012 for push mowers and would apply only to new engines.

Adding catalytic converters will make mowers more expensive and some in the industry resisted the change. The California Air Resources Board has estimated that walk-behind mowers will cost 18 percent more under the new regulation, while the price of commercial turf care mowers will go up about 3 percent.

California already has enacted the rule. The nation's most populous state has unique authority under the Clean Air Act to establish its own pollution rules if it's granted a federal waiver. California got the small-engine waiver last December and began regulating walk-behind mowers on Jan. 1 with the restrictions for riding mowers coming Jan. 1, 2008.

Bond had initially sought to block California from instituting its regulation but backed off under pressure from Feinstein. He did succeed in blocking other states from being able to copy California's rule, something the Clean Air Act normally allows. Instead, he required EPA to write the national standard that was proposed Tuesday.

Bond had questioned whether mowers with catalytic converters could spark fires, but an EPA study last year found there was no safety problem.

"As the author of the statutory provision requiring EPA to issue a national rule, I am glad to see this day," Bond said in a statement. "Contrary to California's ready, fire, aim approach in this area, EPA's deliberate and thoughtful process has considered safety concerns."

The EPA's proposed rule is the same as California's in most respects except for the dates it takes effect, and California officials viewed it as a validation.

Laura Timm, director of corporate communications with Briggs & Stratton, which employs about 1,100 workers at two plants in Missouri, said the company welcomed a national rule instead of one which would apply just to one state.

The rule also would put new emission controls on powerboat and outboard engines starting with the 2009 model year that would result in a 70 percent reduction in smog-forming emissions from those engines, EPA said. Public comment is being accepted on the proposed rule until Aug. 3.

Overall, EPA said that the pollution sources being regulated by the new rule account for about 25 percent of all mobile-source hydrocarbon emissions.

"The bottom line is these standards are long overdue but they will be absolutely essential in order to help many parts of the country meet public-health standards," said Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch, an environmental advocacy group.

State's air panel gets new leader

Mary Nichols held the same position several years ago under Democrat Jerry Brown.

By E.J. Schultz / Bee Capitol Bureau

Fresno Bee, Wednesday, July 4, 2007

SACRAMENTO -- Gov. Schwarzenegger on Tuesday named an environmental lawyer and former top aide to two Democratic governors to lead the governing board of the California Air Resources Board.

The appointment of Mary Nichols comes after the firing last week of the former chairman, Robert Sawyer, and the resignation Monday of the board's executive director, Catherine Witherspoon.

The two former officials have accused the Schwarzenegger administration of meddling in the board's affairs as it tried to implement the state's landmark global warming law.

Schwarzenegger said there is "no better person and more experienced person that is better prepared, that is tough, than Mary Nichols."

Nichols returns to the same post she held from 1978-83, under Gov. Jerry Brown. From 1999-2003, she led the state Resources Agency under Gov. Gray Davis.

Her appointment drew good reviews from business leaders and environmentalists.

Nichols "is a bright woman that understands the issues and is concerned about the environment, but also has a very clear understanding of business," said Manuel Cunha Jr., president of Fresno-based Nisei Farmers League.

Cunha said he dealt with Nichols in the late 1990s when she worked for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in the Clinton administration. He credited Nichols with listening to the concerns of the agricultural industry.

Ann Notthoff, state advocacy director for the Natural Resources Defense Council, said in a statement that Nichols "has proven her mettle time after time as a leader, enforcer and advocate for a healthy environment and public health."

Nichols most recently served as director of the Institute of the Environment at University of California at Los Angeles, a research and public service organization.

The 62-year-old Democrat will be paid \$127,833 as the board's full-time chairwoman.

She will lead an 11-person board that recently has had to defend its decision to approve an 11-year extension of a smog cleanup plan for the San Joaquin Valley. The governor has criticized the delay and called for a tougher plan.

Nichols said she was not ready to offer an opinion on the plan.

"I'm not in a position to comment on the plan that was submitted," she said at a news conference. "I [am] just beginning the process of getting up to speed with the staff."

The plan -- also approved by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District -- extends the smog cleanup deadline to 2024.

Several state board members, including Fresno County's Judy Case, have said there is little that can immediately be done to change the deadline because the technology doesn't exist to fully clean the air.

State Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, a longtime critic of the air district, said that, given the governor's critique of the plan, "there is a great expectation that Ms. Nichols will lead the effort to reverse this action."

Nichols also will be under the spotlight as the air board works to implement the global warming law, which calls for a 25% cut in the state's greenhouse gases by 2020.

Sawyer, after his firing, accused Schwarzenegger's staff of pushing for weaker rules than he wanted. Witherspoon made similar accusations.

A legislative hearing on the matter is scheduled for Friday. Sawyer and Witherspoon are expected to testify. Schwarzenegger, on Tuesday, said he would not allow his top aides to testify, but invited lawmakers to talk about the issue in his smoking tent.

"Anyone that has questions about anything can come and ask us questions," he said.

Fireworks can foul the air, experts warn

By Nick McClellan

Tulare Advance Register and Visalia Times Delta, Wednesday, July 4, 2007

Fireworks may be colorful and thrilling, but if you are sensitive to bad air, they can be harmful, as well.

"We typically see elevated pollution levels [during the holiday]," said Jaime Holt, specialist with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. "It's fairly localized to where the fireworks are being set off."

Holt said that fireworks displays, whether conducted by professionals or family members, give off a fair amount of smoke that can raise air-quality concerns between the hours

of 10:30 p.m. and midnight.

The elevated pollution levels are of particular concern to those with heart or lung disease and children and older adults who may be more susceptible to higher particulate-pollution levels.

"If they are around a big fireworks presentation and there's not wind blowing," Holt said, "it's recommended that they remove themselves from that situation."

Light evening breezes can be expected, said Modesto Vasquez, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Hanford.

"It doesn't look like there's going to be any strong winds," he said.

The air-quality forecast for Wednesday in Tulare County calls for a score of 129, unhealthy for sensitive groups.

That's the highest forecast in the Valley.

Those feeling the effects should "step back inside their air-conditioned home and get away for a while," Holt said.

She said it's not worth risking your health for a dazzling early-evening display.

"Watch from afar, watch on TV and maybe don't go directly where the big fireworks are," she said.

Fireworks add to air pollution

By Sentinel Staff

Hanford Sentinel, Wednesday, July 4, 2007

The rocket's red glare and the bomb's bursting in air makes the atmosphere a little dirtier.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said Tuesday that Independence Day fireworks displays can increase levels of particulate pollution which can be harmful to people with heart or lung disease, children and the elderly.

"During prime time for fireworks displays (9-10 p.m.), we usually see increases in levels of particulate pollution," said Shawn Ferreria, air quality analyst for the Air District.

Jaime Holt, spokeswoman for the Fresno office of the Air District, said analysis over the last five years during Fourth of July shows the spikes are minor, but that people with respiratory problems or asthma should take this into consideration.

"If they think (breathing problems) are about to flare up, they should realize it might be because of the fireworks," she said.

Kings County pollution levels for today are moderate, according to the Air Quality Index.

Holt said a light northwestern wind is expected to disperse some of the pollutants. But problems occur on hot days when an inversion layer traps polluted air in the Valley.

Heat, high pollution levels join July Fourth festivities

By Cheryl Winkelman, STAFF WRITER

Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, July 4, 2007

National pride won't be the only thing in the air when America celebrates its birthday.

Unfortunately, heat and pollution will hang around the San Joaquin Valley during today's Independence Day festivities. Temperatures are expected to hit 104 degrees at the Stockton Metropolitan Airport, the nearest measuring weather station.

Although that's 10 degrees hotter than last year's Fourth of July, it's only a rumor that this year's holiday will be unusually warm, said Johnny Powell, a forecaster with the National Weather Service.

Powell said there are about 22 days every summer — from mid-May to the end of September — when the temperature rises above 100 degrees. Put another way, there is a 15 percent chance it'll hit the triple digits on any given day.

"It just happened to be on the Fourth of July (this year)," Powell said.

Luckily, the heat won't have an effect on pollution levels, already expected to be higher than usual with all the exploding fireworks.

"Fireworks, because of the combustion, can briefly elevate particulate levels," said Janelle Schneider, a spokeswoman for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Those particles can fill the air for hours, from about 9 to 10 p.m., the prime time for most fireworks displays, to early the following morning.

It all depends on meteorological conditions — fireworks are formulated to dissipate quickly, but their particles can hover in the air longer if the air is still, Schneider said.

And because those particles are small enough to invade peoples' bloodstreams, air quality officials are urging those with heart and lung diseases, as well as children and the elderly, to take precautions.

Schneider suggested either skipping fireworks displays altogether, or sitting far away from a large display.

Small, at-home displays should be avoided because people will be too close to the smoke, Schneider added.

For more information, visit the air district's Web site at <http://www.valleyair.org>.

Celebrating the holiday

Fresno Bee, Wednesday, July 4, 2007

Here is a roundup of area Fourth of July celebrations. All area codes are 559 unless otherwise indicated. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District warns people with respiratory conditions to take precautions tonight, as fireworks can temporarily increase air pollution, with elevated levels lasting sometimes until morning.

Bass Lake: Fireworks at dusk today. Bass Lake, 642-3676, basslakechamber.com. Admission: free.

Clovis: Parade begins at 9 a.m. today. The Woods Mobile Home Park, 1001 Sylmar Ave., Clovis, 287-2526. Admission: free.

Clovis Freedom Fest: Gates open at 5 p.m. today. Live entertainment, food booths and bounce houses. Buchanan High School stadium, 1560 N. Minnewawa Ave. Admission: \$5, free for ages 5 and younger.

Coalinga: Gates open at 6:30 p.m. today. Live entertainment, food and raffles. Sunset Street between Dawson and Bishop elementary schools, 935-2948. Admission: free.

Exeter: 9 a.m.-4 p.m. today. Fireworks at dusk, pancake breakfast, 2-mile walk, 10k run, horseshoe tournament, arts, crafts, games, food booths. Exeter City Park, Lion's Stadium, Rocky Hill Drive, 592-2919. Admission: free.

Fowler: Gates open at 6 p.m. today. Live entertainment, games, rides, petting zoo and food booths. Fowler High School, Adams and American avenues, 834-3869. Admission: \$2, free for age 5 and younger.

Fresno Grizzlies' Fourth of July Extravaganza: After today's 6:05 p.m. baseball game, Chukchansi Park, 1800 Tulare St., 320-8497. Admission: \$7-\$15 for game ticket.

Hanford Rotary's fireworks show: Gates open at 5 p.m. today. Live entertainment, games and flyover. Hanford High School stadium, 120 E. Grangeville Boulevard. 583-8252. Admission: free.

Interfaith Alliance of Central California celebration: 9 a.m.-1 p.m. today. Live entertainment, music, dancing and brunch. Fresno State's O'Neill Park, Barstow Avenue, 435-2690, 224-4001. Admission: \$5, \$3 age 11 and younger, \$15 per family.

Lemoore: 8 p.m. today. Music by Chubby Checker. Tachi Palace, 17225 Jersey Ave., Lemoore, 924-7751. Admission: free.

Lemoore's Navy July Fourth celebration: 7 a.m.-4 p.m. today. 5k run, 3k walk, breakfast, parade, music, games, flyover, Lemoore "Idol" contest and pie-eating competition. Lemoore City Park, Bush and Heinlen streets, 924-6401. Admission: free.

Lindsay: Fireworks display at 8 p.m. Friday. Sweet Brier Plaza, Sweet Brier and Hermosa avenues, Lindsay, 333-1994.

Madera: 5 p.m. today. Live music by the Fabulous Rhythm Aces, food booths, kids zone, family activities and fireworks. Madera Municipal Golf Course, Avenue 17 and Road 23, 661-5495. Admission: free.

Porterville: Gates open at 6 p.m. today; fireworks at 9 p.m. Music by Trick Shot, Trevor Jarrett, Jake Mizner and Ashley Brown. Porterville College's Jamison Stadium, 100 E. College Ave., 539-0715. Admission: \$2, free for age 12 and younger.

Reedley: Gates open at 5 p.m. today; fireworks display at 8 p.m. Reedley High School, 740 W. North Ave., 638-3548. Admission: \$6 general, \$5 for seniors, \$3 for ages 3-12, free to age 2 and younger.

Sanger: Gates open at 7 p.m. today. Entertainment by the Andrew J. Magnuson Band and The Blues Brothers; food booths, novelty items and fireworks. Sanger High School athletic field, 1045 Bethel Ave., 876-6300, ext. 4. Admission: \$3, free for age 10 and younger.

Shaver Lake: Boat parade and fireworks at dusk Saturday. Shaver Lake, 841-3350.

Visalia's Freedom celebration: Gates open at 5 p.m. today. Food booths and music by Run 4 Cover. Mineral King Bowl, 1001 W. Mineral King Ave., 713-4365. Admission: free.

Wild Water Adventures' Star-Spangled Revue: 8:30 p.m. today. Wild Water Adventures, 11413 E. Shaw Ave., Clovis, 299-9453, wildwater.net. Admission: \$10.99-\$25.

Ex-resources secretary new air board chief

Arnold made appointment

BY LAURA KURTZMAN, Associated Press

LA Daily News, Wednesday, July 4, 2007

SACRAMENTO - Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Tuesday moved to quell the furor over the departures of two top officials at the California Air Resources Board, appointing former state Resources Secretary Mary Nichols to chair the agency's board.

Schwarzenegger ousted the previous chairman, Robert Sawyer, about a week ago. The executive officer, Catherine Witherspoon, resigned Monday. Both say top aides to Schwarzenegger interfered in their work and tried to undermine implementation of the state's landmark global warming law.

Nichols headed the state Resources Agency under former Gov. Gray Davis and has worked closely with Schwarzenegger's chief of staff, Susan Kennedy, who also worked in the Davis administration. Witherspoon and Sawyer said Kennedy sent mixed signals about global warming and intervened on behalf of businesses that want to weaken the law.

Nichols, 62, was the first person to chair the air board under former Gov. Jerry Brown. She later served in the Clinton administration. Most recently, she has been director of the Institute of the Environment at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Witherspoon said Nichols was a good choice to lead the agency.

"She knows everything there is to know about air quality," Witherspoon said. "She knows and respects the staff, and they feel the same about her. And she has the personal fortitude to step into the climate quagmire."

John White, a lobbyist for several environmental organizations agreed.

"I think she can restore trust and confidence in ARB, if the governor and his staff give her their full support," he said in an e-mailed response to a reporter's question.

Asked at a news conference with the governor whether she worried that administration officials might interfere with her work, Nichols said, "I think that I will be given all of the tools I need to do my job."

Schwarzenegger defended his staff and denied they had micromanaged the air board. He said Nichols would lead the agency through its problems.

"I believe that there is also no better person, more experienced person, that is better prepared, that is tough, than Mary Nichols," he said.

The upheaval at the board has been an embarrassment for Schwarzenegger, who has been depicted around the world as a champion for the environment.

On Friday, the Assembly Natural Resources Committee, chaired by Assemblywoman Loni Hancock, a Berkeley Democrat, will hold a hearing to look into the departures. Sawyer and Witherspoon have agreed to testify.

One question the committee may also delve into is why Witherspoon's computer mysteriously stopped working over the weekend. She said she came to work to download her résumé but could not get into the system. She said computer technicians concluded after several hours of trying to get it to work that someone must have tampered with it.

Democrats say they will ask for the computer to be turned over as part of their investigation.

Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez, D-Los Angeles, praised the appointment of Nichols but said the administration must do more to show it is committed to putting teeth into the global warming law.

"That will also require a commitment from the rest of the Schwarzenegger administration to stop activities seen as undermining the gold-standard global warming legislation we approved," Nuñez said in a statement. "Those activities, along with steps that can ensure the independence and effectiveness of the Air Resources Board, will continue to be the focus of my oversight hearing on (Friday)."

Schwarzenegger said he would not allow Kennedy and another aide sought by Nuñez's committee, Cabinet Secretary Dan Dunmoyer, to testify.

Instead, he invited Nuñez to his smoking tent to air his concerns privately.

Nichols must be confirmed by the state Senate, where she is likely to face tough questions about how she plans to implement the global warming law, known as AB 32.

Governor finds air board chief both sides like

Governor quickly fills top job at air board

Matthew Yi, Chronicle Sacramento Bureau

San Francisco Chronicle, Wednesday, July 4, 2007

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger tapped a longtime environmental lawyer on Tuesday to head the troubled California Air Resources Board, which is charged with implementing the state's ambitious plans to fight global warming.

The appointment of Mary Nichols, 62, who held the same job under then-Gov. Jerry Brown three decades ago, was hailed by environmental groups and businesses as a step toward healing a rift between the governor and the board over how the agency should adopt new regulations.

Schwarzenegger fired board Chairman Robert Sawyer last week after Sawyer tried to enact a pollution-saving measure at last month's board meeting that the governor's staff would not accept and managed to thwart.

Nichols hinted Tuesday that, unlike her predecessor, she will see more eye-to-eye with the governor.

"I am an appointee of the governor, and I think I understand what his priorities are," Nichols said at a news conference with Schwarzenegger at the state Capitol.

Nichols, director of UCLA's Institute of the Environment, added that she is excited about returning to Sacramento.

"I can't resist it. I'm back," Nichols said in her attempt at an impression of Schwarzenegger's famous line in his "Terminator" movies. "It's a terrific time to be coming to the Air Resources Board with all of the work and all of the decisions that have to be made."

But in the past week, the agency and the Schwarzenegger administration have been under fire from environmentalists and Democratic lawmakers after Sawyer, also a Schwarzenegger appointee, was dismissed apparently for being too aggressive in implementing plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

On Monday, the air board's executive director, Catherine Witherspoon, also resigned, placing the agency in further turmoil as it prepares to add more than 120 positions in the new fiscal year for the purpose of meeting the goals of AB32, landmark legislation passed last year that requires the state to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2020.

"I believe that there is no better person, more experienced person, that is better prepared and is tougher than Mary Nichols," Schwarzenegger said. "She has spent more than 30 years fighting for the environment."

Before her stint at UCLA, Nichols was appointed to the California Coastal Commission in the weeks before then-Gov. Gray Davis was recalled from office in 2003. When her term expired six months later, Schwarzenegger replaced her and two other Democrats on the panel with three Republicans.

She faces the daunting task of leading the state agency in charge of planning and implementing programs to meet the goals of AB32 amid the competing interests of business and environmental groups.

Allan Zaremborg, president and chief executive officer of the California Chamber of Commerce, called Nichols a "strong appointment."

Bill Magavern, a Sierra Club lobbyist, said Nichols has the "experience and knowledge" to lead the air board on its difficult mission. "This is the first step toward restoring the confidence in the administration's air quality and global warming efforts," he said. The only question, he said, "is whether the governor's staff will let her do the job."

That has been one of the main criticisms of the administration after it was revealed that one of Schwarzenegger's top aides left a voice mail for Sawyer before the air board's vote on new

emissions regulations, urging the chairman to adopt only the three rules acceptable to the governor.

Nichols said Tuesday that in conversations with the governor in recent days, she has "come to a comfortable understanding that the Air Resources Board can do its job and do it in a historic way that it has, which is with independence and good judgment."

Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez, D-Los Angeles, said that while he believes Nichols can bring stability to the air board, the bigger question mark is the administration.

"I don't think there's any one individual that can solve the problem if the administration continues to try to micromanage that agency and steer it from its mission of protecting the environment," Núñez said.

The speaker has scheduled a public oversight hearing on Friday and has invited both Sawyer and Witherspoon, as well as Schwarzenegger's chief of staff, Susan Kennedy, and Cabinet secretary Dan Dunmoyer, to testify.

On Tuesday, the governor would not say whether he will allow Kennedy or Dunmoyer to participate.

"My friend, Speaker Núñez, is always very welcome to come down ... and ask any questions that he has," Schwarzenegger said.

When told about the governor's reply, Núñez said: "Somebody from the administration needs to be at that hearing. Somebody who can answer questions and who can speak for the governor needs to be there on Friday."

But Witherspoon, who quit Monday as the air board's executive director, praised Nichols as someone who has the right skills and will likely "hit the ground running."

"But it's going to be a hard row to hoe because of this battle going on," Witherspoon said. "The good thing, though, is that everything has been forced out in the open so no one is going to be able to hide the ball anymore. Mary is going to have to explain what's happening and the reasoning behind it under intense scrutiny."

According to her biography on UCLA's Web site, Nichols received a bachelor's degree from Cornell University in 1966 followed by a law degree from Yale Law School in 1971.

She landed her first job as an attorney at the Center for Law in the Public Interest in Los Angeles. In 1974, she was tapped by Brown to become his secretary of environmental affairs and also serve as the chair of the Air Resources Board.

Nichols left Sacramento in 1978 to serve as Los Angeles' chief assistant city attorney in charge of the civil branch, then returned to her state post in 1979 and remained there until 1983, when she went on to become a private consultant on environmental law.

During her private practice, she also served as campaign manager for then-Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley in his bid to become governor in 1986. Nichols later served as director for People for the American Way, a liberal civil rights group, then founded the Los Angeles office for the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group.

In 1993, she was appointed assistant administrator of air and radiation for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In 1997, she left the EPA to head the Environment Now Foundation before being tapped by Davis as his secretary for resources, the job that she held until 2003 before moving to her UCLA positions.

California Air Resources Board

-- The state agency is charged with implementing programs to improve the state's air quality. The proposed state budget includes \$24.4 million for the agency to create 123 new positions to

implement AB32, landmark legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2020.

-- The agency's 11-member board is appointed by the governor. It employs 1,025 workers, and its budget for the fiscal year that ended June 30 was \$329.9 million.

New air board chief named

By Peter Hecht - Bee Capitol Bureau
Sacramento Bee, Wednesday, July 4, 2007

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Tuesday turned to a former top environmental official for Democratic Govs. Jerry Brown and Gray Davis to replace the ousted chairman of the state Air Resources Board.

Schwarzenegger's decision to hire Mary Nichols, director of the UCLA Institute of the Environment, comes after he fired the former board chairman, Robert Sawyer.

The move is being closely watched to gauge the governor's commitment to carrying out California's tough anti-global warming law, Assembly Bill 32, approved last year.

Schwarzenegger, whose public campaign against climate change has drawn him international attention, tapped Nichols to lead California efforts to reduce its greenhouse gases 25 percent by 2020.

Nichols, an environmental policy lawyer, was chairwoman of the Air Resources Board under Brown in 1978. She later served as secretary of the California Resources Agency -- which oversees forestry and fire protection, water, fish and game, and state parks -- under Davis.

In naming Nichols to the post, Schwarzenegger said he selected her to lead his effort "on clean air and climate change" based on her "30-year record of fighting for the environment.

"She was unafraid to make bold decisions. She was fearless in introducing new technologies, and getting past old excuses, to clean up our air," the governor said.

The Schwarzenegger administration has portrayed the governor as irked that Sawyer backed the Air Resources Board's June 14 vote to support a waiver giving San Joaquin Valley polluters until 2024 to comply with federal Clean Air Act restrictions. Sawyer's firing prompted the ARB's executive director, Catherine Witherspoon, to resign Monday.

But environmentalists and Democrats criticized the characterization of the personnel moves as a cover story for an administration that was micromanaging the air board and working too closely with industry lobbyists.

As Sierra Club spokesman Bill Magavern praised Nichols' appointment Tuesday, he charged that the governor's anti-global warming agenda had been bogged down amid meddling by Schwarzenegger aides that undercut the independence of the ARB.

"When Sawyer wanted to move more aggressively (on clean air standards), he was smacked down by the governor's staff," Magavern said. "Now the governor has made it clear that he wants to move forward aggressively, and those are his marching orders to Mary Nichols.

"I hope everyone in the administration will be singing from the same song sheet."

Appearing with Schwarzenegger at the Capitol Tuesday, Nichols said she was assured during meetings with the governor that the ARB will act independently and that she will have "all the tools I need" to enact reforms to combat global warming and protect public health.

"I've come to a very comfortable understanding that the Air Resources Board can do its job and do it in the historic way that it has -- with independence and good judgment," Nichols said.

Nichols served as an assistant administrator for air and radiation for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under President Clinton. She also has worked as a senior staff attorney for the National Resources Defense Council and the Center for Law in Public Interest and was executive director of the Environment Now Foundation.

Schwarzenegger has built a green image by taking on the Bush administration and threatening to sue the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for not giving California permission to set its own tailpipe emissions standards.

But California's own air pollution agency drew criticism from environmentalists when Sawyer, a retired UC Berkeley professor, said San Joaquin Valley polluters needed more time to comply with federal clean air standards.

Sawyer said he backed the delay because needed pollution control technologies wouldn't be available for on-road trucks until 2010 and construction equipment until 2014. He said industries need a decade-long "turnover time."

But V. John White, a lobbyist for several environmental organizations, said he believed Sawyer was doing the bidding of administration aides "micro-managing him, calling him up and telling him what to do."

"It's hard for me to reconcile that they wanted him to be stronger and tougher than he was," White said. "I simply don't believe that story."

Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez, a leading proponent of AB 32, had charged that Sawyer and Witherspoon left their posts because "the administration was tying their hands behind their backs" and not allowing them to fully implement the law.

On Tuesday, Núñez issued a statement praising Nichols' "personal integrity and outstanding credentials" and said he hoped her appointment as ARB chair would "repair some of the recent damage done the board and its independence."

Núñez has scheduled a Friday "oversight hearing" to review whether the ARB is being allowed to operate independently. Núñez spokesman Steve Maviglio said the committee sent a letter Tuesday requesting testimony from Schwarzenegger administration officials, including Chief of Staff Susan Kennedy and Cabinet Secretary Dan Dunmoyer.

Asked whether he would make his aides available to testify, Schwarzenegger on Tuesday instead invited the speaker to come to his smoking tent at the Capitol.

"My friend, Speaker Núñez, is always welcome to come down to our tent and ask any question," he said.

Schwarzenegger spokesman Aaron McLearn said the governor wasn't refusing to let his top aides testify. Yet McLearn indicated it is unlikely they'll appear.

"I think it would be unprecedented to send staff members to testify at a legislative hearing," said McLearn, who said he hadn't seen the request for their testimony. "But we would be happy to send a representative for the administration to talk about protecting the environment."

Schwarzenegger taps Nichols to lead Air Resources Board

Mary Nichols held the state leadership post under Jerry Brown and was a Davis official.

By Evan Halper and Janet Wilson, Times Staff Writers
Los Angeles Times, Wednesday, July 4, 2007

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger sought Tuesday to quiet turmoil at the state's air board and reassert his commitment to the environment by appointing an official from past Democratic administrations to the board's top position.

Mary Nichols will take over the embattled Air Resources Board, which she chaired 30 years ago under Gov. Jerry Brown. She also served as secretary of resources under Democratic Gov. Gray Davis and as a high-ranking environmental official in the Clinton administration.

Her appointment follows the recent departure of two top board officials who both complained publicly that meddling by the Schwarzenegger administration on behalf of business interests limited their ability to adopt effective regulations for curbing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality.

"There is no one more qualified, more committed and more able to lead our efforts on climate change and air quality," Schwarzenegger said at a news conference in the Capitol.

Nichols replaces Robert Sawyer, who says he was fired after pushing to implement more aggressive action to curb global warming than the administration supports.

Although administration officials said Sawyer was fired for not being tough enough, the displaced chairman's assertions were backed up by the former executive officer of the board, Catherine Witherspoon, a longtime veteran of the agency who quit Monday.

Witherspoon said she and her staff were routinely pressured by the administration to soften crackdowns on heavy diesel construction equipment and other machinery after industry officials complained.

The governor appoints the board members with the consent of the state Senate; the board is meant to be independent of the administration.

The appointment of Nichols, one of the state's first environmental attorneys, is likely to blunt complaints from administration critics that Schwarzenegger's actions on the environment are not living up to his bold promises.

"She's superb, and she will be an independent person," Sawyer said. "I would find it hard to think of a better person.... She's a lawyer, and she knows the Clean Air Act probably as well as anybody in the state."

He said that under Nichols' previous tenure as air board chairwoman, historic regulations were implemented on unleaded gasoline, catalytic converters and other matters that helped cement the board's national reputation for toughness and innovation.

Nichols has been involved with the environmental movement since its infancy. She has worked as a senior staff attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Center for Law in the Public Interest, where she initiated some of the first test cases under the federal Clean Air Act and California air quality laws.

According to her biography at UCLA's Institute of the Environment, where she is director, Nichols also co-founded the first environmental justice working group, a multiethnic forum for leaders from traditional environmental and community-based organizations to address issues of environmental equity. She also serves on the board of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

"I am pleased that I am going to be in a position now, after all these years working in the environmental movement, to help restore and burnish the credentials of our Air Resources Board," Nichols said. "It is one of the premier environmental agencies in the world."

She is the latest of several former high-level Davis administration officials to be hired by Schwarzenegger in recent years.

"I'm running out of people to kibitz with," Davis joked Tuesday. "They are all busy working for Arnold."

Davis described Nichols as a "strong, polite, thoughtful environmentalist" who will safeguard the board's independence. "She doesn't mind people calling her, and she will hear them out, but she is going to make her own decisions."

But Democrats and some environmentalists, while praising her credentials, questioned whether Nichols would be able to restore confidence in the board.

"You can have the best person at the helm of the board, but if the administration is trying to micromanage it on a day-to-day basis, it won't make a difference who is in charge over there," said Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez (D-Los Angeles). "It will lose credibility and become politicized."

On Friday, the Assembly will hold a hearing to look into the allegations made against the administration by Sawyer and Witherspoon. Schwarzenegger said his chief of staff, Susan Kennedy, and Cabinet Secretary Dan Dunmoyer, who are accused of meddling, will refuse Democrats' request to testify.

Amid Criticism, Schwarzenegger Names Chief of Air Quality Panel

By JESSE McKINLEY

New York Times, Wednesday, July 4, 2007

SAN FRANCISCO, July 3 — Acting to quell a sudden swell of criticism over his environmental leadership, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Tuesday named a new chairwoman of the California Air Resources Board, an independent agency that has seen both its top two leaders leave in recent days.

The new appointee, Mary Nichols, is a veteran environmental lawyer and University of California professor who served once before as the board's chairwoman, from 1978 to 1983, and was a senior official at the Environmental Protection Agency during the Clinton administration.

"There is no one more qualified, more committed and more able" than Ms. Nichols, Mr. Schwarzenegger said.

Ms. Nichols replaces Robert Sawyer, who was fired in June after a dispute with the governor over an antismog plan of the board. Catherine Witherspoon, the board executive director, stepped down Monday, citing Dr. Sawyer's firing.

Aides to Mr. Schwarzenegger said Dr. Sawyer's appointment was rescinded after the board voted in June to delay the carrying out of federal air quality standards in the San Joaquin Valley. But in an interview on Tuesday, Dr. Sawyer, an air quality expert and professor emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley, called that assertion "nonsense," though he did praise Ms. Nichols's appointment.

"I think the governor's staff has no understanding of the science, policy, technology or economics of air pollution control," Dr. Sawyer said, adding that the governor's office had interfered with board business. "I think they are just trying to cover what they've done."

Aaron McLearn, a spokesman for the governor, said new leadership was needed for the board, which is charged with carrying out AB 32, the ambitious emissions reduction law signed by Mr. Schwarzenegger.

The two departures on the board have caught the attention of prominent Democrats in the state, who plan hearings on the changes on the board on Friday. The criticism seemed to bother Mr. Schwarzenegger, a Republican who has sown an image as an environmentally friendly leader.

On Monday, he complained of "people whining out there" about AB 32. And on Tuesday, he said he did not want to get involved in "the Mickey Mouse stuff" of his recent board decisions.

Ms. Nichols said she had been given assurances of board autonomy from the governor. "I think I've come to a very comfortable understanding that the air resources board can do its job," Ms. Nichols said.

Bombs bursting in air usually mean more pollution on July 4, air district says

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, July 3, 2007

Though valley residents will breathe moderately clean air today, that likely will change around nightfall Wednesday.

Then, smoke from fireworks will fill the air with pollution that can hurt people with sensitive health, officials said.

As a result, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has issued a special warning regarding the health hazards of fireworks.

According to the district's warning, those fountains and Whistling Petes spew unhealthy levels of microscopic particles that can aggravate lung disease, trigger asthma attacks or increase the risk of getting a respiratory infection.

This type of pollution also raises the risk of heart attacks and coronary arrhythmia, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

People at greatest risk are those with heart or lung diseases and small children.

In years past, air-monitoring equipment throughout the valley has recorded dramatic increases in particle pollution on the evening of July 4.

Modesto's concentration of airborne particles went from 15 micrograms per cubic meter at 8 p.m. to eight times that level at 9 p.m. July 4, 2005.

Compared to the 8 p.m. reading, the concentration of particles was 16 times higher at 10 p.m.

Although community fireworks shows contribute to the overall pollution, people are most directly exposed from ground fireworks, the air district has said.

Sensitive people should sit farther back, away from the path of the smoke. The general rule is that "if you can smell it, you are breathing it," the district says.

Wal-Mart megastore planned for Ceres

Supercenter would be just 2 miles away from another store, but two-thirds bigger

By MICHELLE HATFIELD

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, July 4, 2007

CERES — Wal-Mart announced plans Tuesday to add a 208,000-square-foot supercenter on the south side of town near Highway 99.

The Fortune 500 company runs a store at Mitchell and Hatch roads in Ceres. The supercenter would go in a retail area at the northwest corner of Mitchell and Service roads, dubbed the Mitchell Ranch Center, according to a statement from Wal-Mart.

The group also plans to renovate the 124,000-square-foot Wal-Mart site in Ceres. The stores would be less than 2 miles apart in the city of 40,000.

Supercenters usually are larger than regular Wal-Mart discount stores and sell groceries. The nearest supercenter is in Stockton.

Ceres Mayor Anthony Cannella said Wal-Mart has submitted an application to the city and that the city has hired a consultant to start on an environmental impact report. Applicants pay for the reports, he added.

"This is a very long process and we're only at the beginning," Cannella said.

The proposal has to go through several plans, public hearings, the Planning Commission and City Council, the mayor said.

Wal-Mart's proposal estimates the report will be done by early 2009, said Tim Ogden, Ceres economic development manager.

In size, the supercenter would fall somewhere between Ceres' Home Depot and the WinCo Foods distribution center on Crows Landing Road, Ogden said.

Although Wal-Mart enjoys a top spot on the Fortune 500 list, many California cities have denied the big-box retailer's efforts to set up shop or expand.

Turlock successfully denied Wal-Mart's efforts to build a supercenter in 2004 after the council adopted an ordinance that banned big-box stores.

After the state Supreme Court refused to hear Wal-Mart's appeal last year, the Turlock ordinance has become a model for other cities across the state, including San Diego and Elk Grove.

Mayor John Lazar, who as a councilman led the charge against Wal-Mart, said he wasn't surprised that the national chain was looking at Ceres.

"We all know regionally they'd be coming to the area," he said.

Other store 'at capacity'

Wal-Mart spokesman Aaron Rios said the decision to build a Ceres supercenter had nothing to do with Turlock.

"It has to do with the area and regional center. Our existing Ceres store is at capacity," Rios said. "This is a great opportunity to continue to serve our customers."

The new supercenter would "incorporate some of the most progressive architecture and landscaping designs to build environmentally friendly and energy efficient stores that complement local neighborhoods," according to the company's statement. Wal-Mart plans for the supercenter to be 30 percent more energy-efficient than the existing Ceres store, the statement says.

The supercenter would increase Ceres' tax base and create new jobs, according to the release. The average Wal-Mart employee in California makes \$10.77 an hour, according to the statement; California's minimum wage is \$7.50 an hour.

The Arkansas-based company paid more than \$128 million in state and local taxes in California during the 2006-07 fiscal year, according to its Web site. The company also gave \$12 million to community groups across the nation in 2006.

Several groups have popped up across America opposing the company and its values. Opponents argue that Wal-Mart undercuts smaller mom-and-pop businesses, underpays employees and relies on goods produced in foreign nations.

Turlock battled the conglomerate's expansion plans. The city has a Wal-Mart in Countryside Plaza on Fulkerth Road. When the company set its sights on a supercenter in Monte Vista Crossings, residents rallied against it.

The city has spent nearly \$400,000 in three courts fighting the plans.

Despite the legal success, many in Turlock have said Wal-Mart was treated unfairly. Vice Mayor Kurt Vander Weide, who wasn't on the council when the ordinance was passed, has said the city overstepped its bounds. He wasn't surprised that the national retailer was looking to expand on the city's doorstep.

"Turlock is much too juicy a plum to let it slip through their fingers," he said.

Merced residents are up in arms over plans for a 1.2-million-square-foot Wal-Mart distribution center. Supporters argue the building will provide 900 jobs while opponents rebut that the 450-diesel-truck-a-day traffic would damage Merced's already poor air quality.

The City Council is expected to take up the issue this fall after an environmental review is completed.

[Fresno Bee Editorial, Thursday, July 5, 2007](#)

Clear the air, governor

Troubles erupt over priorities at state's air resources board.

The California Air Resources Board is in a stew of disarray. While Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger shares some of the blame for the troubles at the agency, it is also his responsibility to restore leadership and stability to the board. His appointment of a new chief for CARB is a good first step.

On Tuesday, the governor chose Mary Nichols, a long-time environmental official under former governors Jerry Brown and Gray Davis, as the new CARB boss. Nichols also served in the federal Environmental Protection Agency under President Clinton.

Last week, Schwarzenegger fired the board's chairman, Robert Sawyer, for -- among other things -- requesting an 11-year delay from the federal government for the San Joaquin Valley to meet smog standards.

Sawyer shot back that he was fired largely because he wouldn't yield to pressure by the governor's office to dismiss the board's executive director, Catherine Witherspoon.

In a Los Angeles Times interview, Witherspoon accused the governor's office of "unprecedented micromanagement" in implementing the state's global warming law. She resigned Monday with a parting shot at the governor's advisers and their commitment to his agenda.

This isn't entirely surprising. For more than a year, there have been signs of friction and contradiction between Schwarzenegger's magazine-cover environmental image and decisions by the 11-member air board.

In March, Witherspoon contacted the EPA seeking a six-year delay in the deadline for reducing particulate pollution. Environmentalists erupted. The letter was withdrawn.

In May, the board yielded to the construction industry and delayed reducing diesel emissions from off-road equipment. Then it voted to ask EPA for the 11-year delay of clean air in the San Joaquin Valley.

The final tussle came last month as the board prepared to vote on three "early action measures" to reduce greenhouse gases. Sawyer wanted the board to regulate emissions from medium-sized trucks and require heat-reflecting "cool paints" for automobiles to reduce air-conditioning demand.

Sawyer claims Cabinet Secretary Dan Dunmoyer questioned the legality of those measures, and on the day of the vote urged him to drop them.

This last-minute jockeying doesn't speak well for either CARB or Schwarzenegger's inner circle. The air board has earned international respect for its science and open deliberations. Cooking up last-minute key decisions doesn't fit that tradition.

Nichols will have her hands full. Schwarzenegger needs to give her a clear set of priorities and make sure the board enacts them. He also needs to make sure his staff understands the message of this shake-up: The status quo isn't good enough.

[Bakersfield Californian Editorial, Thursday, July 5, 2007](#)

Clearing air: Show biz or 'reality'?

Gov. Schwarzenegger owes us answers about firing of air board officials and cleanup progress.

Californians deserve straight answers. Maybe the hearing Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez has scheduled Friday in Sacramento will help get them.

Last week, Gov. Schwarzenegger fired Robert Sawyer, the man he appointed as chairman of the California Air Resources Board. This week, the board's executive officer, Catherine Witherspoon, quit.

The governor and his staff claim the pair was not moving fast enough to implement California's groundbreaking plan to reduce air pollution and global warming.

Sawyer and Witherspoon claim the governor is full of hot air. Schwarzenegger publicly speaks about cutting air pollution taking the bows for a courageous "super hero" attack on global warming, while privately pressuring Sawyer and Witherspoon to delay cleanup efforts.

The chaos created at the governor-appointed board responsible for cleaning up California's polluted air is embarrassing for the Schwarzenegger administration. It is a major setback for California's air cleanup efforts.

For decades, California has been the leader in scrubbing pollution from the air and implementing tough controls on its residents and industries. Why? Because it has to be.

With its unique geography and smog-trapping valleys, California is one of the nation's most polluted states. Depending on the timing of the survey and the data used, Bakersfield is considered to have the second or third most polluted air in the nation.

California's residents are dying and becoming sick from breathing this polluted air. An alarming number of our children struggle with asthma.

The air in the Central Valley and most other parts of California does not meet federal air pollution standards. Federal penalties, such as the withholding of critically needed transportation funds and the imposition of building moratoriums, loom if California doesn't clean up its act.

So climbing onto their white horses last year, the Democratic-controlled Legislature and California's action-packed Republican governor rode to the rescue with Assembly Bill 32 a landmark global warming law that would cut greenhouse-gas emissions that both pollute the air and increase global warming.

In a chest-beating show, California declared: If the Bush administration and Congress are too chicken to do the tough stuff to curb global warming, California will lead the way.

California's initiative is being closely watched and dreaded by both industry and political interests, including the foot-dragging Bush administration.

But now it appears, with the firing of Sawyer and resignation of Witherspoon, this "war on global warming" was just show business a public show of bravado, while the governor was protecting the interests of some of his biggest campaign contributors by delaying tough air pollution-cutting initiatives.

Californians deserve some straight answers and a straightforward air pollution cleanup strategy from their governor.

The fallout from the ousters of Sawyer and Witherspoon is that the California Air Resources Board has been thrown in chaos just when it is supposed to be developing strict rules to curb pollution and global warming.

[Visalia Times Delta Editorial, Thursday, July 5, 2007](#)

Governor speaks double-talk in global warming

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is gaining a worldwide reputation as an environmentalist, but here at home he is becoming a prophet without honor.

Schwarzenegger has conspicuously mounted the global warming bandwagon along with other celebrity entertainer/politicians. Last month, he was captured on television testifying before Congress with his global warming tag-team partner, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg. He has preached the virtues of a cleaner environment in his visits to Europe and Asia.

Most significantly, Schwarzenegger holds California up to the world as a future model of environmental conscience. Schwarzenegger has painted a vision of the state where technology cures our pollution problems while providing a robust economy for developing those high-tech solutions.

The governor intends California to be a leader in development of fuel cells, hydrogen energy technology and carbon trading. Schwarzenegger talks a good game, but his administration walks a different path, as recent personnel moves indicate.

Last week, the governor fired the chairman of the California Air Resources Board, Robert Sawyer, who said he was fired for pushing for aggressive pollution restrictions. This week, the CARB executive director quit, accusing Schwarzenegger of blocking efforts to clean the air and fight global warming.

Specifically, the two executives said the governor's aides were worried the air board was moving too aggressively to implement the state's new global warming law, known as AB32.

Schwarzenegger signed the law with great fanfare — noting it was the first law in the nation, state or federal, to address global warming, and calling on other states to follow California's lead. It is ironic, some would say hypocritical, for the administration to drag its feet on executing the law.

One of the targets of the CARB is the pollution from diesel engines that run equipment in the construction industry. The 112,000 tractors, excavators, backhoes and other construction vehicles in the industry are the second-largest source of diesel pollution, after trucks and buses, in California. Estimates are as high as \$3 billion to bring that machinery in compliance with the Clean Air Act.

The construction industry is balking at converting all that machinery into non-polluting devices and has asked for more time to implement the rules. Local agencies, such as the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control Board, are annoyed that Schwarzenegger seems to agree that the state should go slow in reducing diesel-fuel machinery.

It turns out that the construction industry is among Schwarzenegger's biggest supporters. Construction companies contributed \$6 million in the campaign to get Schwarzenegger's \$37 billion construction bond passed. They have contributed \$1.3 million directly to the governor's reelection campaign.

It appears the governor talking out of both sides of his mouth with this one.

If Schwarzenegger believes that California should be a model for environmental activism, and that the state will benefit from developing new "clean-tech" technologies, he should proceed at full speed.

As it stands now, Schwarzenegger seems to be playing the very worst kind of corrupt politics — hypocrisy.

[Tracy Press, Editorial, Thursday, July 5, 2007](#)

Playing politics is a lot of hot air

Press Editorial

Tuesday's San Francisco Chronicle front-page headline screamed: "Governor accused of playing politics on warming rule" about Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger forcing the resignation of Robert Sawyer, the popular chairman of the California Air Resources Board.

To the chagrin of impatient extreme environmentalists, later on Tuesday, Schwarzenegger appointed Mary Nichols, a veteran environmental regulator for President Bill Clinton and Democratic governors Jerry Brown and Gray Davis, as the new chairwoman of the air board.

We can visualize Sierra Club spokesman Bill Magavern wiping egg off his face as he declared, "This is really a good step to stabilizing the air board."

Instead of picking on Schwarzenegger for his alleged missteps in trying to halt global warming, the extreme environmentalists should raise Cain over the Bush administration. The president's minions are truly playing politics with California's efforts to fight global warming. Internal e-mails and memos of the U.S. Department of Transportation document an attempt to defeat or, at the least, slow California's request for a federal waiver to have the toughest auto-emission standards in the nation. But the transportation department, with the help of the Auto Alliance, a trade group representing major American automakers, systematically targeted politicians in nine states to oppose California's request, and, in doing so, lengthen the public comment period. Although this blatant political ploy failed, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is stalling a decision on granting California's waiver request.

Schwarzenegger, with the environmentalists' support, should take the Bush administration to court and terminate the political lobbying from what should be a nonpartisan governmental department.

[Sacramento Bee, Commentary, Thursday, July 5, 2007](#)

Thomas C. Austin and Gary Rubenstein: Science, not politics needed on air board

By Thomas C. Austin and Gary Rubenstein

Robert F. Sawyer, the chairman of the California Air Resources Board who was fired by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger last week, is in good company.

The last air board chairman to be fired by a governor was Arie J. Haagen-Smit, who was known as "the father of air pollution control." Until Haagen-Smit discovered the photo-chemical mechanism that causes invisible pollutants to form smog, air pollution control efforts were misguided.

He was fired for refusing to obey a directive from Gov. Ronald Reagan to ease up on pollution control efforts.

But science and economics were on the side of the air pollution control measures being pursued by the air board, not the governor's politics, and Haagen-Smit was a man of science. He could not bring himself to reject science in favor of political expediency.

Sawyer's sin was the same as Haagen-Smit's: He chose to follow the path of good science over good politics.

On June 14, Sawyer led the board to a 7-1 vote in favor of a request from the San Joaquin Valley air district to delay the compliance date for a new federal smog standard.

Despite the application of the best available emissions control technology on all sources in the Valley, there was simply no way to meet the standard while allowing people to continue growing crops and driving cars.

Additional controls have been put in place that will improve air quality, but not quite enough to meet the new federal standard. Unless the deadline was changed, economic sanctions would be required under the Clean Air Act.

Sawyer saw the decision as a choice between meaningless symbolism that would lead to severe economic harm and a politically unpopular decision to delay the compliance deadline. Science and economics were at odds with politics. Sawyer is a man of science, and he could not bring himself to reject science in favor of political expediency.

The governor's office cited two additional reasons for Sawyer's dismissal: failing to press for more early measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and defending the air board's staff director. Sawyer was the lone vote on the air board in favor of additional greenhouse gas measures at their recent hearing, so the first reason doesn't hold any water.

Furthermore, the executive officer of the air board serves at the pleasure of the board, and not of the governor -- a decision made by the Legislature nearly 40 years ago to insulate the director of the agency's staff from political meddling.

Air pollution is a difficult field to manage. Politicians' perceptions of what can be done or what should be done are often inconsistent with good science.

This was true 40 years ago; it's probably more true today with the increasing focus on climate change issues. Effective management of California's challenging air pollution problems requires a steady hand and a strong commitment to good science. This commitment to good science was a hallmark of the air board's first chairman, Arie Haagen-Smit.

Bob Sawyer was the first chairman since Haagen-Smit with comparable scientific credentials in the field of air pollution control. It's hard to imagine a person better suited to lead the board during a time when air pollution regulations are becoming increasingly complicated, expensive and controversial.

Sawyer was not afraid to defend and push for strong regulations when it made sense -- when the regulations were supported by good science. More important, he was not afraid to reject politically expedient decisions when they were in conflict with good science.

The events of the past weeks demonstrate this administration's preference for an air board chairman who will focus more on what is politically expedient and less on what is technically and economically sound. This will present significant challenges for Mary D. Nichols, the new air board chair appointed by the governor Tuesday. The day Sawyer was fired was a sad day in the long and remarkable history of a proud state agency.

[Modesto Bee Editorial, Thursday, July 5, 2007](#)

It's not easy being green, Schwarzenegger learns

Arnold Schwarzenegger has been painted as the green governor. From the covers of magazines and in meetings with world leaders, he's made it fashionable to care about the environment.

That's why Tuesday's appointment of Mary Nichols to chair the California Air Resources Board was important. Only someone of Nichols' stature could save Arnold's carefully cultivated green persona.

Still, Nichols' appointment alone won't make a weeklong controversy over the air board disappear; the governor will have to do more. But we're getting ahead of the story.

On June 28, Schwarzenegger fired Robert Sawyer, the widely respected air board chairman. A professor emeritus at the University of California at Berkeley, Sawyer was known for fairness and insisting on "science-based" decisions.

But he angered Schwarzenegger over the issue of how quickly the San Joaquin Valley's air could be improved. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had set a deadline of 2011 to reduce the basin's ozone levels. Everyone knew the deadline would have to be extended, but activists wanted compliance to be put off only until 2018. The San Joaquin Valley Air Quality Pollution Control District staff insisted on a deadline of 2024. The district's governing board agreed, as did Sawyer and the state board. Apparently, no one had checked with the boss.

Disappointed, he fired Sawyer. A day later, CARB Executive Director Catherine Witherspoon quit — blasting the governor and saying his staff was misleading him; that his inner circle was doing the dirty work of big business; that he was getting in the way of implementing the very programs he championed.

Schwarzenegger has made air quality and battling climate change signature issues. If the air board was not in sync with his program, the governor had to make a change. He did.

Still, with such vehement criticism, the governor's green image was being damaged.

Enter the very capable Nichols. Even the fired Sawyer told the Los Angeles Times: "I would find it hard to think of a better person."

As for claims that Schwarz enegger had been misled, you can call this governor manipulative, a publicity hound or worse — but don't call him a dupe.

We're glad the governor is focused on our valley. But we're no dupes, either. So we have some benchmarks that would amply demonstrate his dedication to cleaning our air:

Nichols must have autonomy in selecting staff and continue sciencebased decision making.

The governor must help the valley get its fair share of clean-air funding from Proposition 1B, the transportation bond.

He must support rules to force major contractors on state road projects to use cleaner diesel engines.

He should support Senate Bill 719, adding health and science experts to the valley's air board.

We believe the governor is green; These actions will help him prove it to everyone.

[Fresno Bee, Commentary, Wednesday, July 4, 2007](#)

DAN WALTERS: Greenhouse gas fight claims two

The messy departure of the chairman and executive director of California's Air Resources Board,

if nothing else, reflects the extremely intense, largely clandestine struggle in the state capitol over how Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's much-ballyhooed anti-global warming crusade is to be implemented.

Schwarzenegger says he fired ARB Chairman Robert Sawyer last week because the veteran energy researcher was moving too slowly on cleaning up the San Joaquin Valley's dirty air. But Sawyer and ARB Executive Director Catherine Witherspoon, who resigned Monday, have a far different version, one that rings truer. They contend that Schwarzenegger's chief of staff, Susan Kennedy, and other aides wanted them to slow down on implementing anti-global warming legislation passed last year.

Schwarzenegger has reaped enormous personal publicity, including the covers of the nation's two major news magazines and victory-lap trips to Canada and Europe, by portraying his global warming campaign as an example of how "post-partisanship" is working in California to effect political policy change.

Behind the glossy facade, however, a fierce battle has erupted over how Assembly Bill 32 is to be implemented _ in effect who will lose and who will gain, and at what cost, as the state caps and then reduces greenhouse gases. The Air Resources Board is on the front lines of the implementation struggle, with potentially immense financial impacts on industry at stake, and Sawyer and Witherspoon appear to be casualties of the battle.

Schwarzenegger stuck with his story when asked about the situation earlier this week, saying that the ARB's decision to ask the federal government for more time to clean up the San Joaquin Valley's smog problem conflicts with California's pressure on Washington _ including the threat of a lawsuit _ to move more quickly on curbing global warming emissions.

That posture "doesn't make any sense to me," Schwarzenegger said during a Capitol news conference, adding, "The right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing." Sawyer and Witherspoon, in a flurry of media interviews, however, assert that the supposed reason for Sawyer's firing was cooked up to mask the administration's desire not to alienate business in implementing AB 32, the landmark global warming bill that Schwarzenegger signed last year and has touted as his signature accomplishment.

On Monday, in an interview with Fresno Bee reporter E.J. Schultz, Witherspoon called the administration's rationale a "cover-up" and added, "The real reason for firing him ... was climate change policy." She said, "The day-to-day orders that we receive from the governor's office are to do less, to delay, to not burden industry."

Schwarzenegger has walked a fine line, positioning himself and California as global leaders in curbing greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide but saying it could be done without harming business by using a market-oriented approach dubbed "cap-and-trade."

Business groups, while lukewarm, at best, to the concept of state involvement in anti-global warming measures _ saying such policies should be national or even international in scope to avoid harm to California's economic climate _ have generally backed the cap-and-trade approach as more acceptable.

Environmental groups, backed by Democratic legislators, have denounced the administration's cap-and-trade policy as beyond the intent of AB 32, however, favoring a more direct regulatory mechanism on emissions. The Democratic version of the state budget, in fact, seeks to deny funds for any development of cap-and-trade policy until broader studies are completed.

"I don't get caught up in all this dialogue," Schwarzenegger said.

Oh, yes he does, big time.

[San Francisco Chronicle Editorial, Wednesday, July 4, 2007](#)

A carbon-neutral Fourth

WELCOME TO the most patriotic and the least environmentally correct day of the year. You won't get any complaint on either count from this corner.

We live in the most outdoorsy state in the union, where access to PF20 sunblock will be a constitutional right soon and the fold-up lawn-chair should be the official state furniture. If ever a place was primed for living outside, this is the one.

No surprise that California proudly claims to be the most green-minded, too, cracking down on tailpipe pollution, industrial emissions and even plastic bags and bottled water in San Francisco.

Yet, today, all this careful thinking and firm resolve is about to be chucked. You can forget about cap-and-trade economics or a carbon-credits program on this day of days. The Fourth is just too big to tame, and that's not a bad thing. Everyone needs a chance to go on a bender, and the time has come. That's why it's called a holiday.

Sitting in shorts and sandals, think of all the rules that are about to be broken. When else do we get to stoke an outdoor fire, sear racks of chemically-enriched meat and drive miles of freeway for no official purpose? Add in outboard engines, some dirt-biking and maybe power-mowing before the guests arrive. It seems the entire day is one delightful plume of smoke.

Then it gets dark and the fireworks come out. Never mind that the California landscape is the driest in years, and the Angora Fire at Lake Tahoe was most likely started by a careless oaf. Or that most cities ban even the wimpiest, safe-and-sane pyrotechnics. And don't forget the terrified pets, scared kids and worried parents. It's a tradition that can defy common sense, but it won't die.

The kabooms and spreading colors are wonders that never get old, but consider the sulphurous clouds put out by Roman candles and sparklers. It's all climbing skyward to join arms with the barbecue fog. For one day, we'll accept it all and like it.

Come Thursday, with the roads filled, smokestacks puffing and haze settling in, it will be time to wonder where it all came from.

[Sacramento Bee Editorial, Tues., July 3, 2007, also in the Merced Sun-Star, Thurs. July 5, 2007](#)

Editorial: Step up, Governor

Air board implodes on his watch

The California Air Resources Board -- the agency in charge of making the state's air breathable and giving teeth to its global warming law -- sits in disarray.

While Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger isn't solely to blame for the troubles at this agency, it is within his power to restore leadership and stability to the Air Resources Board. It is vitally important that he do so.

Last week, Schwarzenegger fired the board's chairman, Robert Sawyer for -- among other things -- requesting an 11-year delay from the federal government for the San Joaquin Valley to meet ozone smog standards.

Sawyer shot back that he was fired largely because he wouldn't yield to pressure by the governor's office to dismiss the board's executive officer, Catherine Witherspoon.

In an interview published Saturday in the Los Angeles Times, Witherspoon added fuel to the fire by accusing the governor's office of "extraordinary and unprecedented micromanagement" in implementing the state's global warming law. She resigned Monday, taking a parting shot at the governor's advisers and their commitment to his environmental agenda.

It may take some time to unravel this "he-said, she-said" tussle of personalities and policies, but this turn of events isn't entirely surprising. For more than a year, there's been a disconnect between Schwarzenegger's magazine-cover environmental image and decisions made by his 11-member Air Resources Board. Signs of friction and contradiction were everywhere.

In March, Witherspoon contacted the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency seeking a six-year delay in the deadline for reducing particulate pollution. Environmentalists erupted. The letter was quickly withdrawn.

In May, the board yielded to pressure from the construction industry and delayed a decision on reducing toxic diesel particulates from off-road diesel equipment. Then it voted to ask the EPA for an 11-year extension on complying with smog standards in the San Joaquin Valley.

The final tussle came last month as the board prepared to vote on three "early action measures" to reduce greenhouse gases.

Sawyer wanted the board to also regulate emissions from medium-sized trucks and also require heat-reflecting "cool paints" for automobiles. (Such paint reduces a car's air-conditioning demand.)

Sawyer claims Cabinet Secretary Dan Dunmoyer questioned the legality of those measures, and on the day of the vote urged him to drop the measures.

All this last-minute jockeying doesn't speak well for either CARB or Schwarzenegger's inner circle. For decades, the air board has earned international respect for its science and its open deliberations. Cooking up key decisions at the last minute isn't in keeping with that tradition.

As governor, Schwarzenegger needs to set clear priorities and make sure his air board enacts them. That means putting the best people in place, monitoring their decisions but entrusting them with the finer details.

Sawyer and Witherspoon are both deeply committed to California, and even if they lacked political savvy at times (and didn't take the stands we advocated) their departure is a real loss. Schwarzenegger's challenge will be to find two similarly qualified people, give them strong marching orders and get out of the way.

[Merced Sun-Star, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, July 5, 2007](#)

Someone's cleaning the air

Editor: I would just like to thank the MMCAC (Merced/Mariposa County Asthma Coalition) for their very kind words of encouragement. And, God bless them and every one of their beloved associates for what they are doing in Fresno and in Sacramento in the neverending battle to improve our air quality! It has been a very long, lonely struggle for me with folks telling me all my life that my ideas of using something other than fossil fuels to power vehicles would never be more than a futuristic pipe dream.

It was in the late 1950s and I was 7 years old when I told my dad I would come up with a perpetual motion source of power someday and to offer an alternative fuel source other than the toxic stuff he said was causing my asthma and bronchitis with our family living right next to the Chevron refinery in Richmond, where he coordinated the business of Chevron's ocean going oil tankers on the "Long Wharf" as a shipping executive. I actually felt sorry for him at the time, since he was the breadwinner of our family and the petroleum industry was his main source of income.

Back then, since being in your 40s meant you didn't have many job options other than "digging a ditch," as dad told me many times (as an incentive for me to do well in school), he felt he couldn't jeopardize our welfare and just quit the business, especially with our Spanish surname which always seemed to place him on the very bottom rung of the work force pay schedule.

Dad literally went from young, dirt poor, shoeless farmworker from New Mexico to California and then eventually was able to study in the hallowed halls of some of California's finest colleges and universities to earn a bachelor's degree in business administration. He then became an executive for Chevron after working in the same offices all night as a janitor (while going to both San Francisco State and UC Berkeley) to support my mom and me. He never did get treated fairly by Chevron, so he finally left them after more than 14 years of dedicated service to work for friends he had gained in the marine industry in the Bay Area.

It was very heartbreaking to see him have to give up on his hopes and dreams of retirement from Chevron. But my dad managed somehow to hold on to his dignity and start over in his late 50s. He even held on to the hope that someday he would see clean streams, rich, healthy soil and clear air again.

Unfortunately, Dad passed away last year, so he never again got to see the clean, clear blue skies of his youth or any retirement other than a modest Social Security income after decades of hard, long hours and dedication. His home in Pinole is gone now, sold for pennies on the dollar last year, and mom now lives on a very modest Social Security income.

Nevertheless, I will continue doing my environmental activism part for my dad — I am hoping to clean up the air some day so that he can at least see me a little more clearly from heaven. I love my dad and miss him very much. Please, keep looking down dad. Some day, some day — God willing, someday.

RON ARAGON, Merced

[Tracy Press, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, July 3, 2007](#)

Do we want farms

EDITOR,

Do Americans know of the rules and regulations imposed on the American farm

Do Americans know that American production is of the highest quality, with stringent rules for everything from pesticides sprayed on plants to drugs used on animals

Do Americans know that governing agencies continue to demand that more expensive and extensive laws be followed, which cause great hardship on the American farmers

Do Americans know that farmers want clean air and water but also would like reason and common sense used when rules are put in place

Do Americans know that the farming industry will die without water rights

Do Americans know that an air quality agency is attempting to declare that cows are more dangerous polluters than autos

Do Americans want farms to stay in the U.S.

Marian McGlothlin, Tracy