

Earmark Directs Hefty Share of Pollution-Control Funding to California

By Avery Palmer, CQ Staff

Congressional Quarterly Wed., July 11, 2007

A Senate appropriations cardinal has secured language in the Interior-Environment spending bill that would direct significant funding for a major new air pollution program to two heavily polluted areas of her state.

California Democrat Dianne Feinstein's language runs counter to the request by a coalition of more than 100 industry groups, environmental activists and state officials that additional money to curb diesel fuel pollution be widely available.

The spending bill (S 1696) would provide \$50 million in grants to help states and localities retrofit diesel engines, funding for the first time one of the key environmental initiatives authorized in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (PL 109-58). Senate appropriators were more generous to the program than was the White House, which recommended spending \$35 million on the grants.

The language Feinstein tucked into the bill would steer the entire \$15 million increase over the president's budget to two heavily polluted areas in California: the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

"These are the two worst air quality districts in the nation, and it's critical that we address the air quality problems," said Scott Gerber, a spokesman for Feinstein, who chairs the Appropriations subcommittee that handles the bill.

The coalition sent letters to House and Senate leaders this spring requesting \$49.5 million for diesel retrofits. They asked that the funding be available regardless of whether an area meets federal air quality standards.

Members of the coalition applauded the funding in the bill but expressed concern about restrictions on where the money can be spent.

As the Bush administration recommended, the Senate bill would restrict the money to areas that do not meet federal air quality standards, excluding scores of urban and rural areas where the air is relatively clean. The House spending bill (HR 2643) passed in June also provides \$50 million for the program and makes the funding generally available throughout the country.

"Just because an area is in attainment doesn't mean there are not very significant benefits that accrue toward regulating diesel exhaust," said S. William Becker, executive director of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies.

Becker, who represents state and local air regulators, said diesel emissions pose human health threats all over the country, even in regions that are attaining federal air quality standards.

Although the coalition has generally opposed restrictions on where the grant money can be spent, members declined specific comment on Feinstein's earmark of the \$15 million.

"Whether they deserve 30 percent of the total is something that has to be resolved in conference committee," Becker said.

But a California official said the funding is a small fraction of the \$100 million that the San Joaquin Valley air district had requested from the state's congressional delegation.

"When you look at the challenges that we face, we think there's a good argument to be made for targeting specific parts of the funding to the San Joaquin Valley," said Tom Jordan, senior policy adviser for the air district.

Residents claim compost facility still stinks

BY FELIX DOLIGOSA JR., Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, July 12, 2007

After authorities found only one recent instance of odor emanating from a compost recycling center near Arvin, residents challenged county officials Wednesday night to visit their homes.

"You can set up tents in my front yard and you could stay there for a week," Patty Stenderup told officials. "You can taste the smell. It's horrendous."

More than 60 people discussed their problems and questions about the Community Recycling at Sunset School with officials on Wednesday.

The Kern County Environmental Health Services Department, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, the Lamont Public Utility District and Community Recycling manager David Baldwin fielded questions in the meeting that was hosted by Kern County Supervisor Michael Rubio.

The meeting aimed to share information between the county and the residents to find a solution to their problems, Rubio said.

Residents claim the Community Recycling facility creates horrible odors and litters the farming community with plastic bag debris.

Community Recycling, located on Bear Mountain Road near Wheeler Ridge Road, makes compost from several sources such as greenwaste and rejected produce from grocery stores.

The county environmental health department recently ordered the company to stop operations after finding contaminants in the facility's compost, Rubio said.

Community Recycling has proposed a cleanup plan to the county and is awaiting approval, Rubio said.

"Community Recycling is doing nothing to clean up until ordered," said resident Pete Pankey. "They're at least poorly managed or bad actors."

As for the smell, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District detected one source of odor from the facility in the past six months, said Michael Oldershaw with the district.

The odors are in the community, said Baldwin, Community Recycling manager.

"There are a lot of vectors out there," he said.

Baldwin referred to the many possible causes of the odors such as nearby dairies, farmland and the Lamont Public Utility Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Patti Spitzer, a vegetable farmer, said she knows what dairies and farms smell like and this smell comes from Community Recycling.

"It has this sickening, sweet, sour smell," she said. "I don't know what's wrong with your nostrils."

Rubio said he will get more officials, with good nostrils, to find the cause of the odors.

"I work for you," Rubio told the audience.

The county is planning on scheduling more public meetings to discuss the facility.

"We will see," Pankey said about eliminating the odor. "It's better now that it's in the open and not behind closed doors."

Site 300 doesn't make bio-lab list

Facility for studying contagions to be built outside California

By Mike Martinez, STAFF WRITER

TRACY — Federal officials have whittled down their list of potential locations for a proposed National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility, and Site 300, in the hills south of Tracy, is not on it.

The Department of Homeland Security selected sites in Mississippi, Kansas, Texas, North Carolina and Georgia as finalists for the proposed lab, much to the delight of local activists.

Marylia Kelley, executive director of Tri-Valley Communities Against a Radioactive Environment, called it "a major victory for the community."

"It's a victory the community as a whole has won," Kelley said. "This facility is going to be one of the most dangerous bio-warfare agent research facilities in the world, not just the country. It's going to be bigger than five Wal-Marts."

The lab had proposed that the research laboratory be built at Site 300. The facility, funded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, would research and develop cures for life-threatening diseases affecting both humans and animals.

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory spokeswoman Susan Houghton said officials were "extremely disappointed."

"We felt our proposal was extremely strong," she said. "We felt more importantly that it was vital that a facility like this be located in the state of California because there was a lot the state had to offer. We don't know any of the specifics why our facility was not selected."

The facility will replace an aging, smaller lab at Plum Island, N.Y., where security lapses after the 2001 terrorist attacks drew scrutiny from Congress and government investigators.

Congress provided money for the \$47 million design and architecture, but no money has been appropriated for construction or operations yet. The site should be announced next year, and the lab should be operating by 2014.

The Plum Island lab conducts research on foot-and-mouth disease and other germs to protect agriculture and livestock from foreign diseases.

The new lab will do that and research on other diseases and contagions, possibly including anthrax, smallpox, and Marburg and Lassa, rare hemorrhagic fevers that attack the vascular system.

The sites were chosen by a team from Homeland Security, along with the departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services.

One of the criteria examined by the panelists selecting the final sites was community acceptance.

In January, the Tracy City Council voted 3-1 to send a letter opposing the Site 300 proposal.

A grass-roots effort, spearheaded by Tri-Valley Cares, also collected thousands of signatures in opposition.

"We don't want to see any unnatural hazards happen in any community," Kelley said.

"Even as we're celebrating our victory today, and it's a huge victory, I'm going to sleep better tonight knowing the Ebola virus, foot-and-mouth disease and anthrax are not coming to Site 300, but they are still planned from some community."

Chris Harrington, a spokesman for the University of California, which operates the Livermore Lab and Site 300, said even though their proposal is no longer under consideration, the university remains committed to working with Homeland Security in the future.

"UC is hopeful that the DHS will not rule out options to locate a bio- and agro-defense facility in California in the future," Harrington said in a prepared statement.

"California is the nation's largest food producer — which includes the largest dairy industry — and the state that has the largest volume of agricultural imports and exports through seaports and borders.

"Working with the DHS to ensure the safety of the multifaceted food production and safety systems of California and the nation will remain a high priority for UC."

Site 300 is still awaiting word on paperwork resubmitted to the [San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District](#) to raise the amount of outdoor explosives allowed during outdoor testing.

The permit application, filed April 6, said the lab anticipates using up to 350 pounds per day and up to 8,000 pounds of explosives per year.

Among the dangerous materials expected to be found in the explosions are thallium and depleted uranium, according to the application.

Last November, Lawrence Livermore Laboratory was granted permission to expand its explosives testing from 1,000 to 8,000 pounds per year.

But the air district rescinded the permits following an appeal hearing in February.

For Athletes, an Invisible Traffic Hazard

By GRETCHEN REYNOLDS

N.Y. Times, Thursday, July 12, 2007

SUSAN JAMES, a 50-year-old probation officer in Bakersfield, Calif., has been a competitive runner for almost three decades. "I've spent a lot of hours running through this city," she said. Which is beginning to worry her.

"Twenty years ago, I didn't have asthma or allergies," she said. Today, she has both, probably due to the same improbable cause. "My doctor told me I'm allergic to Bakersfield air," she said. "I'm actually allergic to it."

In May, the American Lung Association called Bakersfield the third-sootiest city in the country, behind Los Angeles and Pittsburgh.

The news didn't surprise Ms. James. "Sometimes my chest aches" midrun, she said. To combat the pollution, she may soon join a gym for the first time. "I've got a lot of years to run still, and I'm not sure if I can do it outside," she said.

Air pollution is on the minds of many athletes this summer, especially those who, in a reverse of Ms. James's plan, have moved their workouts outside.

Fitness chat rooms resound with worried postings about air quality. As one cyclist wrote on SoCalCycling .com, "During the summer months, I have to ride in the morning and be home no later than 11, otherwise I will feel miserable and cough all day long."

Elite athletes and their retinues, meanwhile, are looking with trepidation toward Beijing, the site next year of the Summer Olympic Games and one of the most polluted cities in the world.

Concerns about air quality in Beijing, climate change automobile emissions and other environmental issues have driven a recent boom in studies of air pollution's medical effects. Most studies haven't used exercisers as subjects. But their results have implications for exercisers, who breathe with particular vigor and oomph.

Kenneth Rundell, the director of the Human Performance Laboratory at Marywood University in Scranton, Pa., said, "Athletes typically take in 10 to 20 times as much air," and thus pollutants, with every breath as sedentary people do. He was the chairman, in May, of a scientific session on air pollution and athletes at the annual meeting of the American College of Sports Medicine.

Still, virtually every expert interviewed said that Americans should not stop exercising outdoors. Rather they suggested that exercisers should keep their distance from exhaust-spewing cars and check air-quality forecasts before venturing out.

That said, a 2004 review of pollution studies worldwide conducted by the University of Brisbane, Australia, found that during exercise, low concentrations of pollutants caused lung damage similar to that caused by high concentrations in people not working out.

Given what can be in the air, "people who exercise outdoors should probably be more worried" than many are, said Morton Lippmann, a professor of environmental medicine at the New York University School of Medicine.

And there are long-term consequences. A study that used the mass of data included in the Women's Health Initiative found that women who lived in communities with relatively high levels of air pollution in the forms of tiny particles - a k a soot - were far more likely to die because of heart attacks than women who lived in cleaner air. Results were published in February in The New England Journal of Medicine.

"Fine particulates are definitely something to worry about," said Dr. Rundell, especially for athletes, who, in the process of exerting themselves, "can take in very elevated doses."

That may go against conventional wisdom. Most people, when they think of air pollution, think first of ozone, a ground-level gas created when sunlight reacts with pollutants emitted by cars and factories. Ground-level ozone, popularly known (and loathed) as smog, has long been recognized as a threat to cardiovascular health.

"Ozone over the long term causes what is similar to a premature aging of the lungs," said Michelle Bell, an assistant professor of environmental health at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

But today most experts agree that, as Dr. Lippmann said, the "greatest overall public health impact" of air pollution comes from fine particulates, which can be seen only with an electron microscope.

They are ubiquitous. Cars, trucks, and diesel buses - the main culprits in the creation of particle pollution - spew untold millions of the microscopic pollutants into the air daily. Exercisers should take precautions against particles, experts said, by not exerting themselves near traffic, or, if they must use a path next to a highway, staying a few hundred yards away from vehicles.

Particles can sail past nasal hairs, the body's first line of defense, and settle deep in athletes' lungs. Some remain there, causing irritation and inflammation. Others, so tiny they can bypass various bodily defenses, migrate into the bloodstream. "Blood vessels do not like those particulates," said David Newby, a cardiology professor at the University of Edinburgh.

Dr. Newby has seen, in action, the effects of those particles on active people. In 2005, he and his colleagues had 30 healthy volunteers ride exercise bikes inside a laboratory for 30 minutes, while breathing piped-in diesel exhaust at levels approximately those along a city highway at rush hour.

Afterward, the researchers did a "kind of stress test of the blood vessels" in the participants' forearms, Dr. Newby said, and found that the vessels were abnormally dilated, meaning blood and oxygen could not flow easily to the muscles. At the same time, levels of tissue plasminogen activator, or tPA, a naturally-occurring protein that dissolves blood clots, had fallen.

"Those are ideal conditions for a heart attack," Dr. Newby said. A heart attack can start when arteries constrict and a clot forms. Without sufficient tPA, the clot isn't dissolved, the artery is blocked, and the heart is damaged.

Dr. Newby recently replicated the experiment with 20 volunteers who had previously had a heart attack. His group found that their electrocardiograms after they exercised in the noxious air showed a blip that indicated reduced blood flow to the heart. Results were reported in March at a meeting of the American College of Cardiology.

"They had the blip during exercise in good air, too," Dr. Newby said. "But it was much more pronounced when they exercised in the polluted air."

No one is sure yet just how the tiny particles become such a threat to the heart. Preliminary research suggests that it may be because they don't work alone.

"The particles have almost no mass but a great deal of surface area," Dr. Lippmann said. In the air, they attract chemicals and circulating heavy metals, which attach themselves to the particles, and, in effect, hitchhike a ride into the lungs and bloodstream.

It is not clear whether resulting inflammation and problems are caused by the particles themselves or their passengers or both, Dr. Lippmann said.

There seems little doubt that the particles do promote cardiac disease - in athletes and others. Dr. Lippmann has found that mice exposed to large doses of the particulates develop atherosclerosis, or narrowed, plaque-riddled arteries. Other studies have suggested similar effects probably occur in the arteries of people, although the evidence is not definitive. Based on experiments to date, though, a 2004 American Heart Association scientific statement concluded that "air pollution may accelerate the development of coronary atherosclerosis."

Dr. Lippmann is quick to point out that any health damage from air pollution depends on the size of the dose. "The risks from one run would be negligible," he said. But the cumulative risk - over months or years of panting through workouts on hazy days - "would not be."

Still, it is not wise to give up outdoor exercise, even if, as Dr. Bell put it, there is a "trade-off between physical health from exercise and damage from air pollution."

"Be sensible and try to cut back" on your exposure to particles, Dr. Rundell advised, but don't use pollution as an excuse to cut back on exercise.

In the calculus of health concerns, "Breathing air pollution is not nearly as bad as smoking," Dr. Lippmann said.

"The bottom line is that running and cycling are healthy and, over all, good for the heart," Dr. Newby said. With proper care, he said, outdoor exercise does not have to be harmful - and, done en masse, could even ease pollution.

"I ride my bike back and forth to work every day," he said. "If everyone else did that, too, we wouldn't be having this problem at all, would we?"

L.A. County offers 'inland port' plan

A hub in the Antelope Valley that would use rail lines could relieve freeway congestion as the ports continue to handle more cargo.

By Rong-Gong Lin II, Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times, Thursday, July 12, 2007

L.A. County officials on Wednesday unveiled plans for an "inland port" in the Antelope Valley - a would-be hub more than 70 miles north of the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach that is aimed at reducing heavy truck congestion throughout the region's freeways.

The proposal comes as officials project a 400% increase in goods movement through the ports over the next 30 years, with transportation experts predicting that all those extra big rigs would further clog freeways.

Much of the cargo now is shipped by trucks on Southland freeways to warehouses and distribution facilities in the Inland Empire before it is distributed across the nation.

But L.A. County officials want a piece of that action and see the Antelope Valley, with large amounts of vacant land and potential rail access, as an ideal site.

The idea would be to transport cargo from the ports to Palmdale and Lancaster by rail, reducing reliance on big rigs.

"The inland port is a necessity if we're not going to choke in congestion in the Los Angeles Basin," said Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich, who convened Wednesday's meeting in downtown L.A. with officials representing transit agencies, the ports, railroads and businesses. "The congestion is here and it's only going to get worse. We need to act now to resolve the problem."

But many challenges face planners.

The fast-growing Antelope Valley suffers from what officials agree is a lack of transportation infrastructure. The existing rail lines are already near capacity, meaning new lines would have to be built to serve the inland port. Moreover, only one freeway - the clogged 14 Freeway - connects the valley to the L.A. Basin.

The inland port idea gained attention in recent months after voters in 2006 passed a \$19.9-billion statewide transportation bond measure, \$3.2 billion of which was allocated for projects to improve the movement of goods through ports and on highways and rail. L.A. County officials are angling for a cut of the money.

The interest also comes as officials have been promoting the development of Palmdale Regional Airport, which could serve as a facility to ship air freight, and as officials have been studying construction of a new freeway or toll road that would connect Lancaster and Palmdale west to the 5 Freeway and east to the 15 Freeway in San Bernardino County.

Inland ports are not a new concept. With land near seaports costly and scarce, other ports around the country have looked inland to develop space for warehouse and distribution facilities and a hub to transport goods by truck, rail car or airplane.

Hasan Ikhata, director of planning and policy for the Southern California Assn. of Governments, said that developing an inland port would be critical to the region's future.

"There is no land to expand the port facilities," Ikhata said. "You need at least 500 acres for a decent inland port facility, and that kind of land is not available in the urban core."

The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach handle one-third of all waterborne freight-container traffic in the U.S., and 50% to 70% of that cargo is headed for delivery outside of Southern California, according to the Southern California Assn. of Governments.

How the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach deal with the projected rise in commerce traffic will play a key role in how Southern California deals with increased freeway congestion. Trucks now use 30% to 40% of freeway capacity.

The region's major freeways, such as the 5, 10, 60 and 710, are often congested with trucks, creating a hazard for motorists.

"Goods movement is really a challenge to us, both because of the congestion it causes, and then the health issues: We have the worst air quality in the country," said Roger Snoble, chief executive of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

Planning for the inland port concept is still in early stages; officials haven't projected how much it would cost or who would pay to build it.

One idea involves a public-private partnership similar to the authority that built the 20-mile Alameda Corridor, a \$2.5-billion below-ground express rail line opened in 2002 that runs mostly in a trench from the ports to downtown L.A.

Such a partnership could, for example, have railroad companies invest in upgrading or building new lines, and shipping companies building warehouses in the inland port.

But it's clear that the inland port would require significant changes:

- **Roads.** Local officials say they desperately need more funds to upgrade their roads, and have discussed ideas such as drilling a tunnel through the San Gabriel Mountains to build a second route. "What we need out of Los Angeles is support - financial support," said Palmdale Mayor James C. Ledford Jr. "If you expect the high desert to accept the growth, you've got to give us more tools to accommodate the growth."
- **Rail lines:** Railroad companies have struggled to compete with truckers for short-haul routes. Trains have the additional costs of loading and unloading cars, as well as paying a truck to haul cargo from the train depot to a final warehouse destination.
- **Logistics:** Officials would need a plan to avoid backtracking. A significant amount of cargo coming in through the two ports stays in Southern California, and officials fear unnecessary congestion if cargo is transported to the inland port on trains, only to be redistributed to trucks that would need to ship it back to the Los Angeles area.

An inland port could also increase pollution levels and congestion in the Antelope Valley, which the U.S. Census reaffirmed last month as one of the fastest-growing communities in the country.

Lancaster Mayor Henry W. Hearn acknowledged those concerns, but added that growth in the Antelope Valley is inevitable, and the region stands to benefit from the inland port idea.

"It's going to raise our economic status; it's going to bring jobs," Hearn said.

Several officials, however, stressed the importance of further study before going forward with the plan.

"It's very important to look at the transportation infrastructure and make sure the site will work," said Thad Brundrett, a land development expert who spoke at Wednesday's meeting. "You can't just go out and build the facility, and hope someone will show up."

[Fresno Bee commentary, Wed., July 11, 2007:](#)

DAN WALTERS: Air board successor a politico

Two weeks after California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger dumped Robert Sawyer as chairman of the state Air Resources Board, the governor and his aides are maintaining strict message discipline about the validity of his reasons -- even if those reasons wander all over the rhetorical map.

They have variously accused Sawyer of being too independent and lacking leadership, while he has steadfastly maintained that he was fired because he resisted pressure from the governor's staff to placate business as the ARB implemented a landmark anti-global warming law.

"Your staff has interjected itself in a manner that has compromised the independence and integrity of this board," Sawyer said in a letter to Schwarzenegger after he was fired.

Schwarzenegger said such characterizations are "not fair" and refused to allow top aides to testify at a legislative hearing into the firing that his spokesman dismissed as a "political drill." To them, it's water under the bridge and everyone should focus on, as press secretary Aaron McLearn said Tuesday, "looking forward."

They're concentrating, instead on promoting Sawyer's successor, veteran environmental bureaucrat Mary Nichols, contending that she's the perfect choice to provide leadership on air quality and bridge the gap between environmental and business interests.

As much as Schwarzenegger would like to put the flap behind him, however, and restore his much-vaunted standing as a global guru of greenhouse gas reduction, there's more involved than a clash of personalities or management style. Underlying everything is a fundamental disagreement over how the state should cap and then reduce its carbon emissions to slow global warming.

Schwarzenegger favors a "cap-and-trade" approach that would use market forces while Democrats lean toward a more traditional regulatory approach and contend that the governor is unilaterally pursuing the former without legislative approval. The conflict is certain to be aired next week as Nichols makes a preliminary confirmation appearance before the Senate Rules Committee.

The administration is hoping that the support it has generated from environmental groups will help Nichols win Senate approval, and it may. But she can expect some tough grilling from Democrats since she's been an advocate of the cap-and-trade approach in the past, most notably while overseeing acid rain issues in the federal government. Citing that experience, Nichols told reporters as her appointment was being announced that, "I believe that we can find appropriate ways to make the trading part of it enhance the overall effectiveness of the program."

The biggest difference between Sawyer and Nichols, however, isn't so much one of philosophy but of political orientation. He is a veteran energy scientist with scant political experience while Nichols, an attorney by trade, has operated in a political environment for 30 years and accepts that when one serves a governor -- this is her third -- or a president, there is just one ultimate boss.

That was driven home eight years ago, during the first months of Gray Davis' governorship, when Nichols was serving as Resources Agency secretary and unilaterally altered the state's position on a high-profile lawsuit pitting farmers against environmentalists on a major water issue. She dropped the state's support for farmers, which generated howls from agribusiness and earned her a very sharp, semi-public rebuke from Davis, who dressed her down at a Cabinet meeting, reminding her that he and only he would set policy.

Her situation was uncannily similar to the pressure that Sawyer says he was getting from the Governor's Office. He refused to buckle to Schwarzenegger, but Nichols bowed to Davis and kept her job.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, July 12, 2007:](#)

Freedom from smoke

I'd like to respond to the individual who wrote about our "rights and liberties" in protesting the possible ban on fireworks. It reminds me of the day I saw these unfamiliar young people parked in a car, loitering in my alley. When I asked them why were parked there, they replied that it was a free country and they could park anywhere they wanted. When did we lose our sense of respect for other people's rights and health? We need to take a better look at this concept of having rights and freedoms.

The thing people probably don't realize, or even care about, is the hazard that the lingering smoke from fireworks imposes on older people and those with asthma or other breathing problems. I am a senior citizen, and fireworks' smoke and party noises on the Fourth affect me and disturb my sleep.

I am not forgetting that young people have fought, and are fighting, for our rights. After all, I should know because I had two brothers fight in World War II and a son fight in Vietnam.

Also, it just blew me away when reading in *The Californian* about people's opinions when asked what the Fourth of July meant to them. Most of them replied that it's more like a holiday to celebrate someone's birthday or just have fun. Hardly any mention was made about it being our country's Independence Day. What?

Being a native-born American, my pride for my country is endless, and I appreciate the rights and privileges we have, but let's be prudent and show common sense and not insist on enjoying those freedoms at the expense of neighbors' and friends' health.

FRAN ESPINOSA, Bakersfield

[Letters to the Fresno Bee, Thursday, July 12, 2007:](#)

Rein in mega-dairies

If we really want to spare the air in the Valley, perhaps what we should really be talking about is sparing the cows. I refer, of course, to the plans to create several new mega-dairies in Fresno County.

In the absence of careful planning and strict regulation, these dairies will significantly worsen the already dismal air quality in our little corner of California. Fortunately, technologies already exist to greatly mitigate the negative effects of dairies on our environment.

Waste lagoons can be covered to capture the gases, which then can be used to generate electricity to help run the dairy -- a move that has been shown to pay for itself in as little as three to five years. Milking barns can also be enclosed, producing similar benefits. Herd sizes can be limited in proportion to the acreage, sparing the air, sparing the humans and even sparing the cows.

Fresno County is currently drafting some new regulations for dairies. Now is the time to get serious about cleaning up our air by enacting regulations strict enough to seriously limit the mega-pollution from these mega-dairies.

Gerry Bill, Fresno

Why air condition the outdoors on hot days?

On a business trip to downtown Fresno on July 5, I was appalled at the air conditioning energy waste noticed during my noon lunch hour. At the Galleria restaurant mall at N and Kern streets, both sets of outside doors were propped open in the 110-degree heat. The inside restaurant doors were also propped open. The overworked air conditioning could not keep up with the hot air coming into the building.

After lunch, I walked across the street to Starbucks, where both doors were wide open to the outside air. Again, the air conditioning had trouble handling the load.

I did not realize that California had so much energy to spare, and that the San Joaquin Valley's air quality was so pristine that people could afford the impact of excessive energy generation.

Unfortunately, it's many little wastes such as I saw that drive both high energy prices and poor air quality, and the impacts on family budgets and peoples' health. Perhaps we can all take the initiative to keep those outside doors closed.

Steven Andersen, Davis

[Letter to the Editor, Sacramento Bee, Wednesday, July 11, 2007:](#)

Zeroing in on Valley pollution

Re "Science alone can't guide air pollution decisions," Daniel Weintraub column, July 8: Any way you look at it, the Air Resources Board's proposed clean construction rule makes sense. In fact, the agency has done an economic analysis of the construction equipment rule, and it adds compelling evidence that the rule is needed.

Without the rule, Californians would pay more than \$18 billion in health costs over the next 13 years. This is about five times more than the rule will cost to implement. Additionally, the rule allows more time for small- and medium-size companies to comply.

Large companies -- those most likely to win the multi-million dollar construction contracts and that have more resources -- will have to comply sooner. Right now, the larger companies want to delay the rule. Delaying or changing this carefully crafted rule, the product of more than two years of workshops and hearings, will only cost Californians more in health, lost time at school and work, and human suffering. The board needs to pass the proposed rule on July 26.

- Kathryn Phillips, Sacramento

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the unveiling of an air quality initiative for San Joaquin Valley farmers through the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. This initiative will help producers in adopting technologies that lower smog-producing emissions. For more information, contact Maricela \(559\) 230-5849.](#)

Anuncian nuevo plan para limpiar el aire en el Valle de San Joaquín, California

El proyecto reunirá asistencia técnica de conservación y una combinación de planes que ahora están en marcha en la comunidad rural

Noticiero Latino, Fresno, CA

Radio Bilingüe, Wednesday, July 11, 2007

El subsecretario nacional de Agricultura, Mark Rey presentará mañana en Fresno un nuevo plan de tres años para ayudar a limpiar el aire en el Valle de San Joaquín, la segunda región mas contaminada en el país, después de Los Ángeles.

El proyecto reunirá asistencia técnica de conservación y una combinación de planes que ahora están en marcha en la comunidad rural.

La prioridad del Departamento de Agricultura será ayudar a los agroindustriales a cumplir metas que pronto les impondrá el Departamento de Reglamentos de Pesticidas de California y la oficina distrital de Control de Contaminación del Aire en el Valle de San Joaquín.