

Judge won't block ports' clean trucks programs

By Associated Press

In the S.F. Chronicle, Merced Sun-Star, Contra Costa Times & other papers, Wednesday, April 15, 2009

Los Angeles, CA (AP) -- A federal court judge upheld the clean trucks pollution reduction program championed by the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach in a ruling Wednesday.

U.S. District Court Judge Richard Leon denied the Federal Maritime Commission's request to block parts of the program that would reduce diesel emissions at the ports by replacing older trucks with cleaner models.

The plan is an "ambitious, multifaceted program to reduce high levels of air pollution while also striving to improve the ports' safety and security," Leon wrote.

An after-hours phone message left for an agency spokeswoman was not immediately returned.

The federal agency challenged the programs in federal court in Washington, D.C., arguing that Los Angeles would require all truckers become employees of trucking companies and jeopardize the ability of independent haulers to work at the ports. Both programs would collect fees to fund the fleet of cleaner replacement trucks.

But the judge ruled the agency failed to prove the clean truck program reduced competition, raised prices or caused irreparable economic harm.

The cities of Los Angeles and Long Beach approved plans last year aimed at significantly reducing diesel emissions at the ports by replacing 16,800 older trucks with newer, cleaner models. By 2012, all trucks passing through the ports must meet tougher 2007 federal vehicle emission standards.

"We have already removed thousands of polluting port trucks from service and today's victory helps clear the path for more progress," said Geraldine Knatz, Executive Director of the Port of Los Angeles.

Port of Long Beach Executive Director Richard Steinke said the ruling made it clear the program and the port's fee were enacted after multiple hearings and meetings with truckers and a lengthy public process.

More than 800 trucking companies and 15,000 drivers have registered for Long Beach's program.

Last month, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a temporary injunction should be granted to stop the ports from requiring harbor trucking companies to replace 20 percent of their owner-operator drivers with employee drivers by the end of this year, as the ports originally mandated.

That case, brought by the American Trucking Associations, which represents 37,000 trucking companies, was remanded back to U.S. District Judge Christina A. Snyder in Los Angeles.

Robert Digges Jr., ATA's vice president and chief counsel, said the program's restrictions left independent truckers in a bind.

Truckers could either "refuse to comply and lose their customers and possibly their businesses, or comply and bear the costs of totally restructuring their business model," Digges said.

U.S. court refuses to halt clean-truck program at L.A. and Long Beach ports

The judge says that regulators presented 'weak' arguments that the program to replace polluting big rigs threatens to cause irreparable harm or to unreasonably increase shipping costs.

By Carol J. Williams

L.A. Times, Thursday, April 16, 2009

A federal judge in Washington refused Wednesday to halt the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach's clean-truck program, which aims to phase out 17,000 polluting big rigs that shuttle freight to and from rail terminals and other transport hubs.

In denying a preliminary injunction sought by the Federal Maritime Commission, U.S. District Judge Richard Leon said the regulators had presented "weak" arguments that the program threatens to cause irreparable harm or to unreasonably increase shipping costs. The busiest ports in the nation, Los Angeles and Long Beach handle 40% of the United States' import and export container traffic.

The commission filed suit in October, alleging that small trucking firms and independent drivers will be driven out of the market by the new rules, issues that will go to trial later.

"This is a clear victory for our clean-truck program and the idea that you can both green and grow the Port of Los Angeles at the same time," Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said of the decision.

Key provisions of the clean-trucks program were declared unconstitutional last month by the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco in a parallel challenge brought by the American Trucking Assn. A ruling is expected April 27 in that case.

While the shuttling of goods to and from the ports is a vital source of economic activity in Los Angeles and Long Beach, the trucks are blamed for contributing nearly a quarter of the diesel particulate matter in the air. State health authorities warn that could cause hundreds of premature deaths each year.

The clean-truck program charges a \$35-per-container fee to generate funds for dealing with the environmental and health consequences, offering a sliding scale of reductions and exemptions for trucks that meet the most exacting clean-air standards.

Organizers call regional emissions plan a success

By Victor Epstein - Associated Press Writer

In the Modesto Bee, Thursday, April 16, 2009

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. -- Organizers and participants in the nation's only working cap-and-trade program for carbon emissions called the fledgling attempt to reduce greenhouse gas emissions a success Wednesday.

Jeanne Fox, the head of New Jersey's Board of Public Utilities, said she hopes the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative will soon fall victim to its own success.

The original idea was to serve as a national model for reducing the greenhouse gas emissions many scientists blame for global warming, she said, noting that the U.S. House now is considering legislation to create a similar national program.

"It's working," said Fox, a member of the initiative's board of directors. "We've succeeded in creating a program that shows cap-and-trade can work nationwide. It's a model for what they can do in Washington."

The 10-state initiative is preparing to hold its fourth auction of carbon credits June 17 for more than 200 power plants that rely on fossil fuels, such as coal, oil and natural gas. The first auction was Sept. 25. Regional groups now are exploring similar initiatives in the Midwest and West.

The goal has been to provide a financial incentive for power plant owners to embrace conservation, without placing themselves at a competitive disadvantage to companies that don't invest in new technology that emits less carbon.

Cap-and-trade programs achieve that goal by limiting carbon emissions and establishing a price for them in the form of offset credits.

Power plant owners that spend the money needed to curb pollution or embrace renewable energy sources receive credits that can be sold to those who don't, Fox said.

Ralph Izzo, chief executive officer of Public Service Enterprise Group Inc., said investors would be wary of utilities at the forefront of conservation efforts without the financial framework provided by the regional initiative. PSEG owns New Jersey's largest utility.

"It enables the industry's good citizens to do the right thing," Izzo said.

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative includes Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.

New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine said the initiative isn't perfect but is off to a good start. He spoke at the opening of a summit Wednesday on energy efficiency and the regional initiative at Rutgers University.

"It's the only real cap-and-trade program that is operating in this country," Corzine said. "It's not perfect - I think it (excludes) far too many carbon producers - but it's off to a good start."

The governor's energy master plan calls for a 25 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and 20,000 green jobs in New Jersey by 2020, Corzine said. It also calls for 20 percent of the state's energy to be generated from renewable sources, such as wind and solar.

Fox said the next step for the regional initiative is to extend the cap-and-trade program beyond power plants to other carbon emitters, such as the transportation sector, which accounts for about 37 percent of New Jersey's greenhouse gases. Power plants generate about 15 percent, she said.

Sustaining the Dream of a Cure

Family of Girl Who Died From Asthma to Hold Fundraiser

By Megan Greenwell, Washington Post Staff Writer

Washington Post Thursday, April 16, 2009

Waldorf resident Claudia Rose Allen Bogan wanted to become a doctor and find a cure for asthma so other children wouldn't suffer the way she did.

She didn't get her chance, dying last year after an asthma attack at age 10, but her family is trying to make sure her dream of a cure will come true. The Claudia Rose Asthma Foundation is planning its first major fundraiser for asthma research, a walk in the Hampshire neighborhood of Waldorf on May 16.

"I realized after she passed away how many people didn't know you could die from asthma," said Katie Bogan, Claudia's mother. "I think it's really important to get that word out there as well as to raise money so we can stop future deaths."

Claudia's family members said they were inspired by the girl's spirit. She never let her severe asthma and allergies stop her from living an active, energetic life. If the [air quality](#) was bad on a day when she had a horseback riding lesson, she'd go anyway and wear a surgical mask. During her frequent hospital visits, she would pass out snacks to other patients.

"Going to the hospital was more about socializing than getting better," her mother said, laughing at the memory.

Claudia died May 17. Shortly afterward, Katie Bogan decided to hold a memorial walk near the first anniversary of her daughter's death. In September, she decided to create a nonprofit organization to raise money for asthma research, and she turned the walk into a fundraiser.

Family members said that planning the walk and other fundraising events has become an important part of healing after Claudia's death. Claudia's two younger sisters and several cousins in the Waldorf area have also gotten involved, making crafts to sell and volunteering to run booths at the event next month.

"It's meant a lot to all of us," said Claudia's aunt Mandy Foreman. "When we think of Claudia now, it's something positive, not just being sad because we miss her."

Although the walk is the foundation's first official fundraiser, donations have begun to arrive. On Tuesday, the Chick-fil-A restaurant in Waldorf donated 20 percent of all purchases made by people who brought in a special coupon. The Bogans plan to donate the proceeds to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, which will earmark it for childhood asthma research.

Claudia's family said the aspiring doctor would be proud to know that her family is working to help other kids with asthma.

"She would be so excited that we're keeping the issue alive," Foreman said. "She might be a little embarrassed that there's so much attention on her, but she would really like that we're doing this."

Third-World Stove Soot Is Target in Climate Fight

By Elisabeth Rosenthal

N.Y. Times, Wed., April 15, 2009

KOHLUA, India — "It's hard to believe that this is what's melting the glaciers," said Dr. Veerabhadran Ramanathan, one of the world's leading climate scientists, as he weaved through a warren of mud brick huts, each containing a mud cookstove pouring soot into the atmosphere.

As women in ragged saris of a thousand hues bake bread and stew lentils in the early evening over fires fueled by twigs and dung, children cough from the dense smoke that fills their homes. Black grime coats the undersides of thatched roofs. At dawn, a brown cloud stretches over the landscape like a diaphanous dirty blanket.

In Kohlua, in central India, with no cars and little electricity, emissions of carbon dioxide, the main heat-trapping gas linked to global warming, are near zero. But soot — also known as black carbon — from tens of thousands of villages like this one in developing countries is emerging as a major and previously unappreciated source of global climate change.

While carbon dioxide may be the No. 1 contributor to rising global temperatures, scientists say, black carbon has emerged as an important No. 2, with recent studies estimating that it is responsible for 18 percent of the planet's warming, compared with 40 percent for carbon dioxide. Decreasing black carbon emissions would be a relatively cheap way to significantly rein in global warming — especially in the short term, climate experts say. Replacing primitive cooking stoves with modern versions that emit far less soot could provide a much-needed stopgap, while nations struggle with the more difficult task of enacting programs and developing technologies to curb carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels.

In fact, reducing black carbon is one of a number of relatively quick and simple climate fixes using existing technologies — often called "low hanging fruit" — that scientists say should be plucked immediately to avert the worst projected consequences of global warming. "It is clear to any

person who cares about climate change that this will have a huge impact on the global environment,” said Dr. Ramanathan, a professor of climate science at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography, who is working with the Energy and Resources Institute in New Delhi on a project to help poor families acquire new stoves.

“In terms of climate change we’re driving fast toward a cliff, and this could buy us time,” said Dr. Ramanathan, who left India 40 years ago but returned to his native land for the project.

Better still, decreasing soot could have a rapid effect. Unlike carbon dioxide, which lingers in the atmosphere for years, soot stays there for a few weeks. Converting to low-soot cookstoves would remove the warming effects of black carbon quickly, while shutting a coal plant takes years to substantially reduce global CO₂ concentrations.

But the awareness of black carbon’s role in climate change has come so recently that it was not even mentioned as a warming agent in the 2007 summary report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that pronounced the evidence for global warming to be “unequivocal.” Mark Z. Jacobson, professor of environmental engineering at Stanford, said that the fact that black carbon was not included in international climate efforts was “bizarre,” but “partly reflects how new the idea is.” The United Nations is trying to figure out how to include black carbon in climate change programs, as is the federal government.

In Asia and Africa, cookstoves produce the bulk of black carbon, although it also emanates from diesel engines and coal plants there. In the United States and Europe, black carbon emissions have already been reduced significantly by filters and scrubbers.

Like tiny heat-absorbing black sweaters, soot particles warm the air and melt the ice by absorbing the sun’s heat when they settle on glaciers. One recent study estimated that black carbon might account for as much as half of Arctic warming. While the particles tend to settle over time and do not have the global reach of greenhouse gases, they do travel, scientists now realize. Soot from India has been found in the Maldives

Islands and on the Tibetan Plateau; from the United States, it travels to the Arctic. The environmental and geopolitical implications of soot emissions are enormous. Himalayan glaciers are expected to lose 75 percent of their ice by 2020, according to Prof. Syed Iqbal Hasnain, a glacier specialist from the Indian state of Sikkim.

These glaciers are the source of most of the major rivers in Asia. The short-term result of glacial melt is severe flooding in mountain communities. The number of floods from glacial lakes is already rising sharply, Professor Hasnain said. Once the glaciers shrink, Asia’s big rivers will run low or dry for part of the year, and desperate battles over water are certain to ensue in a region already rife with conflict.

Doctors have long railed against black carbon for its devastating health effects in poor countries. The combination of health and environmental benefits means that reducing soot provides a “very big bang for your buck,” said Erika Rosenthal, a senior lawyer at Earth Justice, a Washington organization. “Now it’s in everybody’s self-interest to deal with things like cookstoves — not just because hundreds of thousands of women and children far away are dying prematurely.”

In the United States, black carbon emissions are indirectly monitored and minimized through federal and state programs that limit small particulate emissions, a category of particles damaging to human health that includes black carbon. But in March, a bill was introduced in Congress that would require the Environmental Protection Agency to specifically regulate black carbon and direct aid to black carbon reduction projects abroad, including introducing cookstoves in 20 million homes. The new stoves cost about \$20 and use solar power or are more efficient. Soot is reduced by more than 90 percent. The solar stoves do not use wood or dung. Other new stoves

simply burn fuel more cleanly, generally by pulverizing the fuel first and adding a small fan that improves combustion.

That remote rural villages like Kohlua could play an integral role in tackling the warming crisis is hard to imagine. There are no cars — the village chief's ancient white Jeep sits highly polished but unused in front of his house, a museum piece. There is no running water and only intermittent electricity, which powers a few light bulbs.

The 1,500 residents here grow wheat, mustard and potatoes and work as day laborers in Agra, home of the Taj Majal, about two hours away by bus.

They earn about \$2 a day and, for the most part, have not heard about climate change. But they have noticed frequent droughts in recent years that scientists say may be linked to global warming. Crops ripen earlier and rot more frequently than they did 10 years ago. The villagers are aware, too, that black carbon can corrode. In Agra, cookstoves and diesel engines are forbidden in the area around the Taj Majal, because soot damages the precious facade.

Still, replacing hundreds of millions of cookstoves — the source of heat, food and sterile water — is not a simple matter. "I'm sure they'd look nice, but I'd have to see them, to try them," said Chetram Jatray, as she squatted by her cookstove making tea and a flatbread called roti. Her three children were coughing.

She would like a stove that "made less smoke and used less fuel" but cannot afford one, she said, pushing a dung cake bought for one rupee into the fire. She had just bought her first rolling pin so her flatbread could come out "nice and round," as her children had seen in elementary school. Equally important, the open fires of cookstoves give some of the traditional foods their taste. Urging these villagers to make roti in a solar cooker meets the same mix of rational and irrational resistance as telling an Italian that risotto tastes just fine if cooked in the microwave.

In March, the cookstove project, called Surya, began "market testing" six alternative cookers in villages, in part to quantify their benefits. Already, the researchers fret that the new stoves look like scientific instruments and are fragile; one broke when a villager pushed twigs in too hard.

But if black carbon is ever to be addressed on a large scale, acceptance of the new stoves is crucial. "I'm not going to go to the villagers and say CO₂ is rising, and in 50 years you might have floods," said Dr. Ibrahim Rehman, Dr. Ramanathan's collaborator at the Energy and Resources Institute. "I'll tell her about the lungs and her kids and I know it will help with climate change as well."

Eco-friendly ideas for your wedding

By Charli Penn - WeddingChannel.com

In the Merced Sun-Star, Thursday, April 16, 2009

Planning a socially- and environmentally-friendly wedding is a nice idea, but you've got enough to think about while putting together your big day...right? Actually, it's never been easier to create a beautiful and eco-friendly wedding. Here's how:

SWITCH OUT YOUR TRANSPORTATION

Make an [emissions-free](#) statement by leaving your reception in a gas-free ride. If your wedding is outdoors, consider exiting on a "Just Married" bicycle or in a horse-drawn carriage. Or, if you're getting married near the water, jump in a boat and ride away on the waves - eco-friendly and incredibly romantic.

Let your special day live on a little longer by sharing it with people in need. Rather than toss all your still-gorgeous flower arrangements, donate them to a local hospital or convalescent home. The same goes for any leftover food-most soup kitchens and homeless shelters can arrange to have someone swing by your reception to pick up unused refreshments.

THINK ORGANIC

Look for a florist that offers pesticide-free flowers, which are just as beautiful as their chemically treated counterparts but far better for the environment. Or consider using a local vendor for seasonal blooms to cut down on transportation costs and fuel emissions. To go even greener with your greenery, choose a reusable centerpiece. Small trees or potted plants can become a beautiful and meaningful part of your garden or home decor after the big day.

SELECT A WORTHY VENUE

Consider having your wedding in a local garden, museum or historic building. These are often run by socially conscious nonprofits, so your rental fee will support a good cause. Make sure to discuss where your rental fee will go; hopefully, at least a part will be put toward new programs and facility upkeep.

PICK NATURAL FABRICS

Avoid dressing your wedding party in fabrics that require dry-cleaning - the harsh chemicals used in the process are tough on the environment. Look instead for natural materials like linen or cotton, which are kinder on the environment and more comfortable for your bridesmaids and groomsmen.

[Fresno Bee Smog Blog, Wed., April 15, 2009:](#)

Feds announce huge fine

By Mark Grossi

Invista -- one of the world's largest producers of nylon, spandex and polyester -- will pay a \$1.7 million civil penalty and spend up to an estimated \$500 million to correct self-reported environmental violations at facilities in seven states, federal officials announced.

California is not one of the seven states, but the sheer size of this is worth mentioning.

The corporation disclosed more than 680 violations of water, air, hazardous waste, emergency planning and preparedness, and pesticide regulations to EPA.

The corporation found the problems after auditing 12 facilities it acquired from DuPont in 2004. The facilities are in Delaware, Georgia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

"By correcting these violations, Invista will reduce harmful air pollution by nearly 10,000 tons per year," said Catherine R. McCabe, acting assistant administrator of EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the worldwide economic crisis will impact air quality. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Calidad del aire se verá afectada por la crisis

María Teresa Montaña

El Universal, Thursday, April 16, 2009

TOLUCA, Méx.— El secretario de Medio Ambiente del gobierno del estado de México, Guillermo Velasco Rodríguez, reveló que la crisis económica mundial generará un impacto en la calidad del aire de la Zona Metropolitana del Valle de México, ya que se prevé un retroceso en la renovación vehicular que se venía dando en la región.

Indicó que esta cifra es altamente probable que se vea reducida como un reflejo de la situación económica de las familias, que ante el panorama que se aviora dejarán de lado las opciones para comprar nuevos vehículos. "Lo que sí nos puede pasar con la crisis es que se frena la renovación del parque vehicular, o sea si tenías un determinado ritmo de que la gente compraba un coche nuevo y vendía su vehículo viejo, y ese viejo iba sacando otro más antiguo de circulación. Ahora ya no será así", indicó.

El funcionario también informó que de hecho ya se tienen los primeros reportes de que se han dejado de adquirir unidades y el mercado vehicular se está contrayendo. Puntualizó que hasta 2008 se venían renovando entre 250 mil y 300 mil unidades al año, y en esa misma proporción, unidades obsoletas o viejas iban saliendo de mercado mexicano.

Sin embargo, insistió, que ahora no será así y a la larga esta situación de crisis se podría reflejar en la calidad del aire para la zona metropolitana del Valle de México. Dijo que de las miles de unidades que se introducían al estado de México cada año, la mayoría correspondían a municipios metropolitanos.

También expresó que esta situación generará que a la larga el parque vehicular que circule en el valle de México sea más viejo. “Bueno es un hecho de que no va a ser el mismo ritmo de crecimiento, pero lo que sí es que vamos a tener un parque vehicular más viejo circulando”, sostuvo.

Velasco Rodríguez admitió que esta situación aún no impactará de forma directa en la calidad del aire, pero a la larga sí puede ocurrir. “Esto puede generar que en 2009 tengamos una calidad del aire no tan buena como la que tuvimos en 2008”, puntualizó.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the effect spam mail has on the environment. In 2008, 62 billion spam mails went out, wasting enough energy for about 2.4 million homes in the US.](#)

Spam afecta al medio ambiente

El Universal, Thursday, April 16, 2009

Jueves 16 de abril de 2009

SAN FRANCISCO.— El “spam” (correo basura) perjudica al ambiente. Así lo señala un informe de la empresa de seguridad electrónica McAfee Inc., que indica que el spam generó 62 billones de “mails” en 2008, que desperdiciaron energía como para abastecer a 2 millones 400 mil hogares en EU en un año. (AP