

Valley Air District's "Healthy Air Living" Public Chat

Merced Sun-Star, Thursday, July 2, 2009

The event will be held at the Madera County Library, Madera, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

This FREE chat is a fun and rewarding way to learn about the air quality in the Valley and how to make big improvements through simple changes. Guests will be entered in drawings to win electric lawn mowers and bicycles. Light refreshments will be served. Activities are available for kids. For more information, call the Air District at (559) 230-6000.

Thursday, July 9

EPA proposes regulations to cut ship pollution

By H. Josef Hebert - Associated Press Writer

In the Modesto Bee, Merced Sun-Star, S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Thursday, July 2, 2009

WASHINGTON -- The Environmental Protection Agency is proposing tougher rules to reduce air pollution from large oceangoing ships, including oil tankers and cargo vessels.

The agency announced Wednesday it is beginning work on a regulation that would cut harmful chemicals releases from smokestacks of ships within 200 miles of the U.S. coast. The proposal would set tougher engine requirements and fuel standards for the large U.S.-flagged ocean going vessels

The United States also is negotiating with Canada over establishing coastal emission control zones. The EPA said the new proposed regulations and measures being worked out with Canada together are expected to cut nitrogen dioxide releases and soot pollution from large ships by 80 to 85 percent.

U.S., California programs to reduce ship emissions

The mandatory use of cleaner fuels will improve the air quality of coastal cities, Gov.

Arnold Schwarzenegger says.

By Amy Littlefield, staff writer

L.A. Times, Thursday, July 2, 2009

Targeting one of the biggest sources of air pollution, federal and state regulators moved forward Wednesday with plans to slash emissions from big diesel-powered ships entering U.S. coastal areas.

Under rules that took effect Wednesday, the roughly 2,000 ocean-going vessels that enter California ports each year must switch to fuel with lower sulfur content before coming within 24 nautical miles of the state's coast.

The use of cleaner fuel will yield immediate reductions in harmful air pollutants such as diesel particulate matter, sulfur oxides and nitrogen oxides, according to the California Air Resources Board, which issued the regulations.

The state plan will mandate an even cleaner fuel starting in 2012.

California, home to some of the dirtiest air districts in the nation, has traditionally led the U.S. in innovative pollution rules, not only affecting ships but also automobiles and power plants. About 40% of the nation's imported goods move through the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, creating massive emissions from trucks and vessels. "This new measure will help coastal residents breathe easier and reduce pollution in our oceans and waterways at the same time," Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said.

Also Wednesday, the federal Environmental Protection Agency proposed long-anticipated standards on the engines and fuel of U.S.-flagged vessels, which would lower fuel sulfur content

below 1,000 parts per million -- matching California's 2012 requirement -- within 200 miles of the U.S. coast, starting in 2015.

The proposal is part of an international effort to reduce shipping emissions under the Marine Pollution Treaty. The EPA proposal would also mandate improved engine technology to decrease emissions of nitrogen oxides.

National environmental groups applauded the federal proposal.

"These ships are like giant smokestacks on the sea," said Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch. "They cause pollution and public health problems not only for coastal communities but for millions who live inland."

The California rules, which kick in before the federal standards, apply not only to U.S.-flagged ships but to all ships entering state waters. "We need the health benefits in the interim," said Mike Scheible, the air board's deputy executive officer.

An estimated 3,600 premature deaths will be avoided under the state regulations between now and 2015.

The shipping industry has objected to regulation by states, arguing that international bodies should establish maritime rules.

But T.L. Garrett, vice president of the San Francisco-based Pacific Merchant Shipping Assn., an alliance of more than 60 industry organizations, said Wednesday that the group's members were "fully prepared to comply" with the new California rules.

The shipping alliance had filed a lawsuit against the Air Resources Board, saying state attempts to regulate shipping violated federal law.

A federal judge Tuesday upheld the state's ability to set its own rules regarding clean fuel.

Still, the group favors international standards that "will bring uniform and meaningful emission reductions" rather than a "random patchwork of local regulations," John McLaurin, president of PMSA, said in a written statement.

Hummer offices, production to remain in America, CEO says

By Mark Phelan - Detroit Free Press

In the Modesto Bee, Thursday, July 2, 2009

The money behind Hummer may come from China, but the maker of iconic SUVs will keep its headquarters, engineering and manufacturing in the United States, and Michigan may just land the head office, Hummer CEO Jim Taylor recently told me over breakfast.

Hummer will also develop new vehicles to replace its current models, improve fuel economy and broaden its lineup, said Taylor, who ran Cadillac and developed the luxury brand's acclaimed CTS sport sedan before General Motors put him in charge of selling Hummer last year.

Taylor now has to make sure Hummer remains a going concern after finalizing the sale to Sichuan Tengzhong Heavy Machinery Co. Ltd. in mid-July.

From such tasks as hiring staff, figuring out where Hummer will be based, assuring a supply of new models, building sales and burnishing its image, Taylor has his hands full.

"This brand's gone down a long way," Taylor said. "The only way back to health is product."

Tengzhong's commitment to rebuilding Hummer's model line was a key reason its offer for the brand won.

"It wasn't necessarily the high bid that won, but the best bid for Hummer's long-term prospects," Taylor said. "GM's livelihood is its dealers and customer base. It's not in GM's interest to hurt them."

Taylor and his associate Wei Shen, who played a key role establishing GM in China, first visited Tengzhong in November. Tengzhong's leaders "understood they were buying the talent and the team, not just a brand," Taylor said. "The human aspects of the deal were far more important than the money."

The independent Hummer will revive vehicles GM shelved to concentrate on high-volume brands like Cadillac and Chevrolet, Taylor said. That includes a replacement for the H2 SUV, a new version of the H3 that borrows ideas from the open-air HX concept vehicle, and maybe a smaller model to compete with the Jeep Wrangler.

Hummer will pay GM to build its vehicles and have access to some GM technology to meet new fuel economy and [emissions requirements](#).

Hummer made money last year, and sells one-third of its vehicles outside the United States, Taylor said. He expects exports to rise, particularly to Russia and the Middle East, where Hummer is very popular, as well as new markets including China. He hopes to stabilize U.S. sales around 25,000 a year, the level Hummer enjoyed in its most successful years.

"Hummer headquarters, engineering and manufacturing will all be in the United States," Taylor said. "It's very important for Hummer to be seen as an American brand, like Harley-Davidson."

That provides an opportunity to "save a lot of jobs in Detroit," Taylor said.

Hummer's staff will initially consist of about 100 people, most of them probably former GM employees who might have lost their jobs in the automaker's ongoing cuts.

In addition to using GM platforms and assembly for new Hummers, Taylor will hire suppliers with broad technical expertise for engineering work.

Hummer's headquarters will be somewhere with an existing pool of automotive talent, he said. Detroit, Nashville, Tenn., and South Carolina are all candidates.

Michigan is the sentimental favorite, but it must match whatever incentives the others offer.

"We all live here. This is where we'd like to be," Taylor said. "Detroit is very well-equipped with talent in every field you need to make and sell cars."

Hummer should announce its new HQ location sometime in August.

"Assuming Michigan is competitive, my team will treat it as the first choice," Taylor said, adding that he expects Michigan's proposal to be "very competitive."

\$308 million designated for green power plant -- but will it be built?

By John Cox, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, July 2, 2009

The federal government set aside another \$308 million to help stimulate Kern's economy Wednesday, in this case for a clean-burning power plant proposed to be built near Taft. It would be the county's largest stimulus project to date — if it gets built.

The roughly \$2 billion project would create up to 1,500 construction jobs, as many as 100 permanent jobs and enough energy to power more than 150,000 homes.

Partners behind the project — energy giant BP and mineral company Rio Tinto — have made no decision on whether to build the plant, which would not begin operation until late 2014 at the soonest. Until such a decision is made, likely late next year or early 2011, the project is undergoing engineering, design and other pre-construction work.

A spokeswoman for the partnership, Hydrogen Energy International, said the Department of Energy dollars would be doled out as the power plant reaches various milestones. That should help get the project going, she said.

"I think the real value in this type of grant is that it's pre-operation," spokeswoman Tiffany Rau said.

If built, the plant is expected to generate \$5 million in one-time tax revenues and \$1 million in annual tax revenues.

The Hydrogen Energy California Project is considered forward-thinking in that it would extract hydrogen from otherwise dirty petroleum products — petroleum coke or coal, or a combination of the two.

The plant would burn the hydrogen for fuel and put most of the byproduct carbon dioxide to good use increasing nearby oil production. Most of the carbon dioxide ultimately would be sequestered underground so as not to increase greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

"Both the (Department of Energy) and Hydrogen Energy recognize that this project may become the model for new power generating facilities around the world," said company CEO Lewis Gillies.

Another company official credited Gov. Schwarzenegger and members of the state Public Utilities Commission for helping bring about the federal contribution.

Cynthia Bryant, director of the California Recovery Task Force, said in a press release: "This project is a fantastic use of Recovery Act dollars because it will not only create green collar construction jobs, but it will avoid greenhouse gas emissions and further propel us toward a clean energy future.

"The Schwarzenegger Administration has been working to get California's fair share of federal stimulus funding and getting it out the door and into California's economy as quickly and effectively as possible, and this project is a prime example of federal Recovery Act action in California."

Already Kern has been awarded more than \$100 million in federal stimulus money for various transportation, civic and military-related projects, but none is as large as the award announced Wednesday.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, July 2, 2009:](#)

Ban necessary

I kind of hate to see a ban on fireworks. I have fond childhood memories of 4th of July celebrations, complete with adult supervision and a bucket of water. However, with our air quality here in Bakersfield, I suppose it is necessary.

Besides, have you seen the prices? The packages should read: safe, sane and "spensive."

Kerry De Remer, Bakersfield

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, July 2, 2009:](#)

Common sense gone

It's time to do it, folks, time to ban personal fireworks. The common-sense factor is gone, and it's a different time and place. The environment is in shambles and so is our economy. We can't keep spending money we don't have to overstaff fire and law enforcement to cover this. Don't forget, by some measures we have the worst air quality in the nation.

Time to rethink things, people. What future are we giving our children and generations to come?

Timothy Mills, Bakersfield

[Merced Sun-Star, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, July 2, 2009](#)

Cap-and-trade prognosis

This sounds like another Proposition 65, Clean Water or Clean Air Act. The EPA got so powerful and made it hard for businesses, big and small, to comply with regulations. Some big businesses moved out of California. A lot of small businesses could not move; they were forced to close because of the outrageous fines.

Now it's global warming, with a new name, cap and trade. Businesses have to buy a permit to release gases. How is the money for permits going to help the atmosphere? Why not call it taxes?

President Obama wants to give us \$3,500 to \$4,500 for our old cars that don't get high gas mileage. I have an older car. It's paid for, and I believe it has another 100,000 miles on it. I can't afford payments on a new car, even if Obama gave me \$4,500 to trade in for a new car. How is this money going to help GM, Chrysler and Ford? Obama said it's OK to use this money to buy foreign cars!

If Obama wants to do something for every single person, he should take over the oil industry, like he took over the auto industry, and sell us gas that we can all afford.

Bob La Ninfa
Modesto

[Fresno Bee commentary, Thursday, July 2, 2009:](#)

Play hardball on carbon costs

By Thomas Friedman

There is much in the House cap-and-trade energy bill that just passed that I absolutely hate. It is too weak in key areas and way too complicated in others.

A simple, straightforward carbon tax would have made much more sense than this Rube Goldberg contraption. It is pathetic that we couldn't do better. It is appalling that so much had to be given away to polluters. It stinks. It's a mess. I detest it.

Now let's get it passed in the Senate and make it law.

Why? Because, for all its flaws, this bill is the first comprehensive attempt by America to mitigate climate change by putting a price on carbon emissions. Rejecting this bill would have been read in the world as

America voting against the reality and urgency of climate change and would have undermined clean energy initiatives everywhere.

More important, my gut tells me that if the U.S. government puts a price on carbon, even a weak one, it will usher in a new mind-set among consumers, investors, farmers, innovators and entrepreneurs that in time will make a big difference -- much like the first warnings that cigarettes could cause cancer.

Ditto if this bill passes. Henceforth, every investment decision made in America -- about how homes are built, products manufactured or electricity generated -- will look for the least-cost low-carbon option. And weaving carbon emissions into every business decision will drive innovation and deployment of clean technologies to a whole new level and make energy efficiency much more affordable.

That ain't beanbag.

Now that the bill is heading for the Senate, though, we must, ideally, try to improve it, but, at a minimum, guard against diluting it any further. To do that we need the help of the three parties most responsible for how weak the bill already is: the Republican Party, President Barack Obama and We the People.

This bill is not weak because its framers, Reps. Henry Waxman and Ed Markey, wanted it this way. "They had to make the compromises they did," said Dan Becker, director of the Safe Climate Campaign, "because almost every House Republican voted against the bill and did

nothing to try to improve it. So to get it passed, they needed every coal-state Democrat, and that meant they had to water it down to bring them on board."

What are Republicans thinking? It is not as if they put forward a different strategy, like a carbon tax. Does the GOP want to be the party of sex scandals and polluters or does it want to be a partner in helping

America dominate the next great global industry: energy technology? How could Republicans become so anti-environment, just when the country is going green?

Historically speaking, "Republicans can claim as much credit for America's environmental leadership as Democrats," noted Glenn Prickett, senior vice president at Conservation International.

"The two greatest environmental presidents in American history were Teddy Roosevelt, who created our national park system, and Richard Nixon, whose administration gave us the Clean Air Act and the Environmental Protection Agency." The elder George Bush signed the 1993 Rio Treaty, to preserve biodiversity.

Yes, this bill's goal of reducing U.S. carbon emissions to 17% below 2005 levels by 2020 is nowhere near what science tells us we need to mitigate climate change. But it also contains significant provisions to prevent new buildings from becoming energy hogs, to make appliances the most energy efficient in the world and to help preserve forests in places like the Amazon.

We need Republicans who believe in fiscal conservatism and conservation joining this legislation in the Senate. We want a bill that transforms the whole country not one that just threads a political needle. I hope they start listening to green Republicans like Dick Lugar, George Shultz and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

I also hope we will hear more from Obama. Something feels very calculating in how he has approached this bill, as if he doesn't quite want to get his hands dirty, as if he is ready to twist arms in private, but not so much that if the bill goes down he will get tarnished.

That is no way to fight this war. He is going to have to mobilize the whole country to pressure the Senate -- by educating Americans, with speech after speech, about the opportunities and necessities of a serious climate/energy bill. If he is not ready to risk failure by going all out, failure will be the most likely result.

And then there is We the People. Attention all young Americans: Your climate future is being decided right now in the cloakrooms of the Capitol, where the coal lobby holds huge sway. You want to make a difference? Then get out of Facebook and into somebody's face.

Get a million people on the Washington Mall calling for a price on carbon. That will get the Senate's attention. Play hardball or don't play at all.

Thomas Friedman is a columnist for the New York Times.