

Gamboa named to SJV Air Pollution Control District board

Mayor will be first Visalian represented in regional group

By Geral Carroll

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2009

Visalia will be represented on the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board for the first time in the board's 17-year history, officials reported Tuesday.

Visalia Mayor Jesus Gamboa was one of four members appointed to an agency that measures and reports on air-pollution levels in eight counties: Tulare, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings and Kern. The appointment of a Visalia representative is significant, Gamboa said.

"Clean air is important to Visalia and the rest of the Valley," he said during a break in Tuesday's Visalia City Council meeting at City Hall. "Visalia now has a voice."

The board also has two Tulare County representatives for the first time, said Tulare County Supervisor Steve Worthley, who has been on the air board for six years.

Also named to the board during an Aug. 31 meeting were: David Ayers, city councilman for Hanford; Ann Johnston, city councilwoman for Stockton; and Randy Miller, member of the Taft City Council.

Gamboa said pollution from diesel trucks on Highway 99 is but one component of the chronic air problems the Valley has endured over the years.

"Equipment use is also a factor," he said. "It's not all cars and trucks."

Valley geography helps create some of the most serious air pollution in the nation, he said.

"Bad air just collects here," he said. "But we have to be vigilant and do something about it on an ongoing basis."

Worthley said Valley air quality has improved 60 percent over the past 20 years, in part because of stringent enforcement of emissions-control efforts by the air district board. But the job is far from complete, he said.

"And with the addition [of Gamboa], progress will be even more evident," Worthley said. "He's a great addition."

Additional Facts

San Joaquin Air District

Members of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board:

- Jesus Gamboa, Visalia
- Steve Worthley, Tulare County
- David Ayers, Hanford
- Ann Johnston, Stockton
- Randy Miller, Taft
- Chris Vierra, Ceres
- Tony Barba, Kings County
- Judith Case, Fresno County
- Ronn Dominici, Madera County
- Henry Forman, Ph.D., governor's appointment
- Michael Nelson, Merced County
- William O'Brien, Stanislaus County
- Leroy Ornellas, San Joaquin County
- John Telles, governor's appointment
- Ray Watson, Kern County

Source: San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

Miller officially on air pollution board

Taft Midway Driller, Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2009

It's now official.

Taft City Councilman Randy Miller is one of the 12 members of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Miller's appointment was one of four approved on August. 31.

The other new members of the board, which oversees air quality issues in the valley, include:

- Councilmember David G. Ayers, City of Hanford
- Councilmember Jesus Gamboa, City of Visalia
- Mayor Ann Johnston, City of Stockton

"I want to welcome these four new Board members, and I look forward to working with them to improve air quality in the Valley," stated the Governing Board Chair, Ceres Councilmember Chris Vierra.

The appointments take effect immediately, and are for a three-year term, which began in January 2009.

The other members of the board include:

- Councilmember Chris Vierra, City of Ceres, Board Chair
- Kings County Supervisor, Tony Barba, Vice Chair
- Fresno County Supervisor, Judith G. Case
- Madera County Supervisor, Ronn Dominici
- Henry Jay Forman, Ph.D., Appointed by the Governor
- Merced County Supervisor, Michael G. Nelson
- Stanislaus County Supervisor, William O'Brien
- San Joaquin County Supervisor, Leroy Ornellas
- John G. Telles, M.D., Appointed by the Governor
- Kern County Supervisor, Ray Watson
- Tulare County Supervisor, J. Steven Worthley

The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the Valley air basin portion of Kern. Visit www.valleyair.org to learn more.

Stubborn LA blaze flares up

By Raquel Maria Dillon, Associated Press Writer

In the Hanford Sentinel, Wednesday, Sept.9, 2009

LOS ANGELES -- Fire officials tried to stay aggressive in stunting the growth of a huge wildfire north of Los Angeles, but the flames and the winds that fanned them have proved unpredictable.

More than half of the stubborn fire was surrounded Monday, but plans to set preventive backfires had to be scrapped with a new flare-up in yet another area. Fire officials canceled plans to burn out brush and create a buffer south of the ferocious fire to protect the foothill neighborhoods of the San Gabriel Valley.

Incident Commander Mike Dietrich said late Monday that the weather -- including 30-40 mph winds and 10 percent humidity -- didn't cooperate, and the aircraft needed to support and monitor the burnout operations were diverted to the fire's northeastern flank.

The blaze was 56 percent contained and had blackened 157,220 acres, or 246 square miles, as it burned deeper into the wilderness.

"Even the mountain goats won't climb in there because it's so steep and rugged," U.S. Forest Service spokesman Nathan Judy said.

Meanwhile, Los Angeles County sheriff's and fire investigators continued their homicide investigation into the fire. Officials have said the cause of the fire was arson but have released no other findings.

Los Angeles County firefighters Tedmund Hall and Arnaldo Quinones were killed in a truck accident Aug. 30 while seeking an escape route for their inmate fire crew after flames overran their camp.

Sheriff's spokesman Steve Whitmore said the men's vehicle was airlifted off a mountain and taken to a secure location Monday so investigators could analyze it. The examination of the site where the fire started near the Angeles Crest Highway wrapped up Monday, he said.

Damage assessment teams counted 78 homes, two commercial buildings and dozens of outbuildings destroyed by the blaze.

EPA to reject Texas air permit process

By John McFarland, Associated Press Writer

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2009

DALLAS—The air-pollution permitting process in the nation's largest greenhouse-gas producing state does not adhere to the Clean Air Act and portions of it should be thrown out, federal regulators said Tuesday in an announcement applauded by Texas environmentalists.

The Environmental Protection Agency proposed rejecting Texas' flexible permits, which allow polluters to exceed emission limits in particular areas so long as they reach an overall emissions average. The EPA also said it plans to reject other rules, including those allowing polluters to make changes at facilities without the lengthy permitting process that requires public hearings.

"Texas' air permitting program should be transparent and understandable to the communities we serve, protective of air quality, and establish clear and consistent requirements," Lawrence Starfield, the EPA's acting regional administrator for Texas, said in the statement. "These notices make clear our view that significant changes are necessary for compliance with the Clean Air Act."

Texas has major air-pollution problems, thanks to numerous coal-fired power plants, oil refineries and petrochemical plants in and around Houston, assorted other plants around the state, and millions of cars on the road. Houston and Dallas have never been within Clean Air Act requirements for ozone pollution.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality—which has long been at odds with the EPA over permitting—defended its process as a success.

"Now that the EPA has placed its cards on the table and we finally know what specific objections they have with our programs, we look forward to working with them to resolve outstanding issues," agency executive director Mark Vickery said. "We hope the EPA will consider the actual emission reductions achieved through our state programs and will continue to build on those successes."

Environmental groups have for years criticized the permitting process as a rubber stamp in a state that's friendly to industry. The state agency's commissioners have approved 97 percent of the air permits that have come before them since 1971, although TCEQ officials note that the vast majority of permits sought don't even make it to commissioners.

"We're not surprised at this and we've been pushing for this for quite some time," said Neil Carman of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club. "Our concerns had fallen on deaf ears under the Bush administration EPA, but we have new leadership at EPA and they're taking action. This is just the beginning. The whole program has problems."

Andy Wilson, the global warming program director for the group Public Citizen, called the announcement "the day of reckoning that we've known has been coming."

The EPA's rejections are set to become final next year, after a 60-day period for public comment. In the meantime, the EPA will work with the state agency, industry and environmentalists to "quickly identify and adopt changes that will better protect air quality for all Texans."

The EPA made the announcement as the result of a lawsuit settlement forcing the agency to approve or disapprove aspects of the Texas permitting process, spokesman Dave Bary said.

States are required to enforce the federal Clean Air Act, but they're given some flexibility in how to do it. The EPA approved Texas' major clean-air permitting plan in 1992, and the state has since submitted more 30 regulatory changes.

[Fresno Bee Earth Blog, Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2009:](#)

Four air district board members named

By Mark Grossi

The long-awaited expansion of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District governing board has been completed. Four board seats -- all members of city councils in the Valley -- have been filled.

The new members include David G. Ayers of Hanford, Jesus Gamboa of Visalia, Ann Johnston of Stockton and Randy Miller of Taft.

The board now has 15 members. The new members will serve three-year terms, which began in January 2009.

State Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, and fellow Democrat Sen. Michael Machado of Linden in San Joaquin County pushed through a state law in 2007 to add new members.

Note: Ann Johnston is mayor of Stockton and is not a councilmember.

[Letter to the Contra Costa Times, Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2009:](#)

Easy target?

I am appalled by Richmond Mayor Gayle McLaughlin's comments in her letter published Aug. 27.

It seems she cares more for 500 environmental activists than the 1,000 Richmond residents who lost their jobs. I am sure voters will let her know how pleased they are with her when she is again up for election.

Whatever her personal views may be, the Air Quality Control Board was satisfied with the measures Chevron had taken for the project and air quality.

Why is McLaughlin so intent on trying to control the refinery?

I don't see her expending this much energy on any other business in Richmond. Could it be Chevron is an easy target with deep pockets?

The "ball" is in her hands and how difficult she may want to make it for the refinery to do its business safely and efficiently.

Gene Berry, San Pablo

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses high air pollution levels due to the wildfires in California provoke an alert. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Provoca alerta contaminación del aire por incendios en California

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, September 08, 2009

Los incendios, que continúan activos en el área de Los Ángeles y San Bernardino en California provocaron una mayor contaminación a la región con el aire, de por sí el más deteriorado en el país.

La Administración Distrital de Calidad del Aire en el sur del estado emitió alertas para la población en la región. Dijo que los menores de edad, los ancianos y quienes padecen de enfermedades respiratorias y cardíacas deben permanecer en interiores como medida preventiva.

Para el resto de los residentes, la administración exhortó a realizar actividades en exteriores solamente si es necesario.

Las áreas más afectadas son las montañas y los valles de San Gabriel y San Bernardino, así como las comunidades vecinales en los linderos del norte de Los Ángeles, donde por ahora fue parcialmente controlado el incendio Station.