

✓ AIR POLLUTION SJ M 1-30-91
Residents vent views on air rules

State-ordered standards on pollution anger many

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Santa Cruz County supervisors, taking a first look at seemingly draconian proposals to meet state-mandated air pollution standards, got an earful Tuesday from constituents who think the government is going too far.

"You'll have a massive revolt on your hands," predicted Doug McConnell, of the Aptos Council of Improvement Associations, a coalition of homeowner organizations, after he heard some of the proposals.

"Paying for some of these ideas will be taking food from my children's mouths," complained Santa Cruz resident Lorie Weber, who said she was a low-income single parent with three youngsters.

"I don't even think we have a problem in Santa Cruz," said Ray Tate, who described himself as an emissions expert familiar with state air quality regulations.

Occasional pollution

But, as two regional planning officials explained, it doesn't really make any difference whether Santa Cruz has a problem or not because all parts of California have to meet the standards. And in fact, they said, there is an occasional air pollution problem in the Monterey Bay area as measurements of ozone, one of the most dangerous components of smog, exceed the state standard of 0.09 parts per million.

Those readings occur about "a half-dozen times a year" in the Hollister area and Carmel Valley, said Janet Brennan, a planner for the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District.

The state has identified a "moderate" ozone problem in this region, called the North Coast Air Basin, according to Greg Koert, a planner for the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments.

In order to meet the state air-quality guidelines, Koert told supervisors, a mix of several pollution-reducing methods is being considered for the Monterey Bay area.

Paying for parking

Some, he admitted, were going to be tough on people — and one that drew fire in a previous presentation to the Scotts Valley city council may be shelved, at least temporarily. That plan, to require stores and shopping centers to charge drivers for using their parking lots, needs to be established as a statewide program in order to be equitable, Koert said.

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Officials air proposals to reduce pollution

Methods include obligatory car pools

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He told supervisors that charging shoppers for parking has proved to be "very effective to encourage car-pooling and use of transit" in other states. But, he agreed, some people would drive out of town to shop in nearby areas that didn't adopt the pay-for-parking requirement.

Other proposals mentioned by Koert included:

- ✓ Forcing firms employing 100 or more workers to reduce trips to and from the company — by requiring car-pooling, for instance — by 40 percent by the end of 1994. This plan, if adopted for the Monterey Bay air pollution district, would go into effect next January, and a similar rule for firms employing 50 or more workers would be mandated as of January 1993.

- ✓ Creating transportation management associations. These groupings of several businesses, such as stores in a downtown area, would have to meet similar "trip-reduction" goals as major employers.

- ✓ Requiring high schools, community colleges and universities to meet similar goals as businesses.

Supervisor Jan Beautz was skeptical of that last proposal, noting that if schools such as Soquel High in her supervisorial district reduce parking facilities students will merely leave their cars in adjacent

neighborhoods.

Supervisor Fred Keeley noted several times during the discussion that not only are the air-quality standards mandated from Sacramento but that county supervisors will not be making the decisions on ways to meet the guidelines. Rather, he stressed, decisions about which steps to take to meet the tough standards will be taken by the tri-county Air Pollution Control District on a regionwide basis. The district includes Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties.

Brennan, a planner for the district, also pointed out that "there is no deadline" to meet the standards, although steps to reduce ozone in the atmosphere must get under way soon unless even stricter policies are mandated by the state.

"We are designated as having 'moderate' ozone pollution," she said. "That means we think we can achieve the state standards by 1994. If we think it might take longer, we could be designated as having a 'serious' problem, and the requirements could become more onerous."

"We want to achieve these standards as soon as possible."

Comments from the meeting will be forwarded to the air pollution control district, Keeley said.