

2007: AN ENVIRONMENTAL YEAR IN REVEIW

by Supervisor Linda Parks, January 2008

If 2007 is any indication, 2008 may well be a banner year for the environment. Last year we saw the pendulum start to swing back in favor of the environment as strong advocates of environmental protection were appointed to head major agencies, legislation was implemented to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and steps were taken towards better stewardship of Ventura County's natural resources.

The pioneering AB32 legislation written by former State Assemblywoman Fran Pavley from Agoura Hills requires measures in place by January 2008 to cap greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. The law applies to new and existing sources of emissions, including emissions associated with new development projects (such as vehicle trip generation, energy consumption of buildings, and construction practices, government operations, and general plan updates). Actions to meet the goal are already in the works as government agencies calculate current emissions and develop ways to reduce them.

Reducing emissions also leads to less reliance on oil, reduced demand on electricity, and lower energy bills as solar panels, wind turbines, energy efficient buildings, hybrid vehicles, and low energy lights are used. Conserving water also plays a big part in reducing emissions as water use consumes 19% of California's electricity and 88 billion gallons of diesel fuel every year.

Overseeing AB32 implementation is Governor Schwarzenegger's newly appointed Executive Director of the California Air Resources Board, Mary Nichols. Ms. Nichols is thoroughly suited for the role having served as Secretary for California's Resources Agency as well as a California Coastal Commissioner and a longtime staff attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council. Another environmental leader, H. David Nahai, was confirmed as the new General Manager for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. He was tapped in 2007 by Mayor Villaraigosa to turn the nation's largest municipal utility - which is accountable for 98 percent of Los Angeles' municipal contribution to greenhouse gases - into "the cleanest and greenest power company in the nation." A third prominent environmentalist, Tracy Egoscue, was appointed in 2007 by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board to be their new Executive Officer. Ms. Egoscue, an attorney and former Executive Director of the Santa Monica Baykeeper, will help ensure clean water for surface, ground and coastal waters covering a jurisdiction of 11 million residents in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.

Clean water efforts in Ventura County got a big boost in 2007 when the County and its ten cities, along with dozens of other county organizations and special districts, became joint recipients of a State Water Board grant of \$25 million for infrastructure to improve water and wastewater systems that flow into groundwater basins, creeks and the ocean.

2007 also saw the Ventura County Board of Supervisors support measures to reduce pollution, protect open space and encourage green building. The Board supported the

EPA's finding that both Halaco in Oxnard and Rocketdyne's Santa Susana Field Lab be Superfund sites for clean up of highly toxic contaminants, including radioactive material. We also limited the use of anti-coagulant rodenticides in County parks, golf courses and flood control facilities after it was found the poisons work their way up the food chain and instead of just killing rats and gophers, the rodent baits (like D-Con) were also killing off bobcats and mountain lions. The Board has recently expanded the program to be an Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM), setting guidelines that require the least toxic forms of pest control.

The Board of Supervisors has also directed staff and, as members of the Air Pollution Control District, will be receiving back a comprehensive Climate Change Action Plan in line with AB32 legislation. In 2007 the County saved \$100,000 using energy retrofits, has a fleet of hybrid vehicles, launched a green building website (www.builditsmartvc.org) and offers incentives to developers who utilize green building construction.

2007 also saw for the first time ever, the cities of Moorpark, Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley come together to discuss their concerns for the protection of the Tierra Rejada Valley Greenbelt. With public support and leadership, the city councils will hopefully join the Board of Supervisors in 2008 in support of an enforceable law to protect the open space that separates the three cities.

2008 may also be the year when the wetlands along the south side of the 101 freeway between Borchard and Wendy Roads are purchased for preservation. With just a few wetlands left in Ventura County, its all the more critical that we preserve what is left, both for wildlife, and for people including school children to learn about wetland habitats.

More than just protecting the environment, 2008 bodes well for improving the environment. We have good policies in place, promising environmental leaders, and great opportunities to reduce pollution in our air, soil and water, and protect open space; making our world in 2008 a better place.