

DEL MAR TIMES

Clean and Green panel stays busy

Thursday, August 20, 2009

By Steve Goetsch

Three years ago this summer Solana Beach signed the Mayors Agreement on Climate Protection and the citizens committee who urged Solana Beach to think about climate change took the name Clean and Green Committee. Since then we have helped create collection points for plastic bags, held public lectures, promoted conservation and green building.

One of the things we have learned is some of the rules that Professor Barry Commoner proposed 40 years ago: "Everything is connected to everything else."

We meet every month at City Hall with about 25 people regularly attending and 50 more following along through the notes I send out.

Jack Hegenauer, Danny King and others have worked diligently to create a Greenhouse Gas Inventory for Solana Beach, listing and quantifying every known source of harmful gases. As you might expect, more than 55 percent of our emissions come from transportation, especially the Interstate 5 freeway that bisects our town. Jack estimates Solana Beach will emit 582 million pounds of carbon dioxide "equivalent" in 2010, or 20 tons for every resident!

That leads to what we learned this summer from a graduate student in public health at San Diego State University. She has been using state of the art measuring equipment for the last six months to measure "ultrafine" particles, which are particles 100 nanometers or smaller in size, along the I-5 corridor.

These UFPs are implicated in a lot of studies as potentially dangerous in their effects on human health. They are so small they penetrate deep into the lungs and are not expelled by coughing. These particles are generated in large numbers by diesel truck engines and tend to stay near the freeways, but also into the yards of people like me who live near the freeway.

And that brings us to the final point: Caltrans is overdue to hold hearings in Solana Beach and other North County cities on their eight-year-old plan to vastly increase the size of the I-5 freeway from Del Mar Heights Road all the way to Oceanside. Everything we have seen in Solana Beach in the last two years is just the warm-up: the real billion-dollar expansion is still to come.

I close with one of Commoner's other laws, "There is no such thing as a free lunch." We all enjoy the advantages of a technological society, but now we have to learn to reduce the consequences.

Check out the "Green Flash" button at www.cityofsolanabeach.org.

