# **Glimpse of Kern's oil-free future at EPA workshop Nov. 13**

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**Body**

Nov. 11-- Nov. 11--The state's war on ***oil*** comes to the front lines this week.

The California Environmental Protection Agency will host a public workshop Wednesday evening at Bakersfield College's Norman Levan Center, where EPA officials, along with representatives of partner agencies, will solicit public input on two state-funded studies that focus on California's quest to achieve ambitious carbon neutrality goals by 2045. A second workshop will be held the following evening in the Los Angeles County city of Wilmington, home of the third-largest producing oilfield in the Lower 48 states.

The 2019-20 state budget authorizes $3 million for two studies: One to identify strategies to significantly reduce emissions from vehicles, and the other to determine how the state might decrease the demand and supply of fossil fuels. Specifically, the second study seeks to figure out how to manage a major reduction in ***oil*** and gas extraction throughout California.

It's that last part about decreasing supply that will be of particular interest in Bakersfield, where a steady flow of ***oil*** fuels the local economy in a significant way.

"The handwriting's on the wall, and it's been on the wall for a while," said Bakersfield's Paul Gipe, an authority on renewable energy. "***Kern*** County is the most vulnerable county in the state: Not only are we affected by climate change, with drought and such, we're also the ones who pump all the ***oil*** which contributes to it. The county (government) hasn't really paid attention to the topic; they've kept their heads in the sand, and now the state is bringing the conversation to us. So I guess that's good."

A primary focus for the researchers involved in the study will be mitigating the damage to the community's economic health sure to follow a major decline in ***oil*** production. That will be a challenging task in ***Kern*** County, where ***oil*** is the No. 2 employer, constitutes 16 percent of the economy, pays an outsized share of services-funding property taxes and accounts for a huge chunk of local philanthropic giving.

What kind of industry can replace all that, and presumably in the span of just a few years? Good question.

"It's important that they come up with a plan for a just transition away from ***oil***," said Gordon Nipp, vice chair of the Sierra Club's ***Kern***-Kaweah Chapter. "The impact on ***Kern*** County is going to be huge, and it's important to note that the EPA's language here is a 'just transition.' Whether you agree or not that we need to adjust away from ***oil***, it's going to happen. We need to do something.

"Now, as far as exactly what sort of changes we ned to make and what new industries need to come in, I don't know that," Nipp said. "Hopefully they'll be willing to entertain some ideas. And hopefully the state will be willing to invest in education, which will be central to all of this."

Chad Hathaway, owner and founder of Bakersfield-based Hathaway LLC, an independent ***oil*** producer, questions the thought process of those who would shut down ***oil*** production in California.

"It's great to reduce pollution," he said. "We should all be doing it. But all industry has waste. And still people come after us. ...

"I don't think the governor really has an understanding of energy," he said. "The places we'd have to import ***oil*** from (if ***Kern*** ***oil*** were to shutter) aren't even members of the Paris Accord (on climate change). About 25 percent of the people elected in this state consider this (quest for zero emissions) a religion, not a science."

The interagency team developing a framework for the studies, led by CalEPA, includes the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, the California Natural Resources Agency, the State Transportation Agency, the California Energy Commission and the California Air Resources Board.

CalEPA kicked off the public portion of the effort with a workshop in Sacramento on Sept. 24.

Wednesday's workshop at the Levan Center will be held 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Parking is available in Lot P2, best from Haley Street.

Thursday's workshop will be held from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Banning's Landing Community Center, 100 E Water St., in Wilmington.

CalEPA is also soliciting comments and inquiries about the studies via email (climatechange@calepa.ca.gov) through Nov. 22. The agency will post public comments on its website.

The studies are funded with proceeds from California's Cap and Trade program and are part of California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that uses Cap-and-Trade funding to work toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving public health, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

The studies are authorized by the Budget Act of 2019, which includes this language:

Vehicle Emissions Study

Of the funds appropriated in this item, $1,500,000 shall be available for a study to identify strategies to significantly reduce emissions from vehicles and to achieve carbon neutrality in the sector, including the transition to zero-emission light-duty vehicles, in particular, passenger vehicles, the transition to zero-emission heavy vehicles, and the adoption of other technology to significantly reduce emissions from heavy vehicles; the role of alternative fuels; and the impact of land use policy. The study shall include, but not be limited to, strategies for reducing vehicle miles traveled, including increasing transit ridership. The Secretary for Environmental Protection shall consult with the State Air Resources Board, Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission, the Transportation Agency, the Office of Planning and Research, and the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development on the study.

Demand and Supply of Fossil Fuels Study

Of the funds appropriated in this item, $1,500,000 shall be available for a study to identify strategies to decrease demand and supply of fossil fuels, while managing the decline of fossil fuel use in a way that is economically responsible and sustainable. The Secretary for Environmental Protection shall contract with the University of California system to produce this study. An interagency state team led by the California Environmental Protection Agency shall further develop the scope of the study in order to evaluate pathways to achieve a carbon neutral economy by 2045, manage the decline of in-state production as the state's fossil fuel demand decreases, and assess potential impacts to disadvantaged and low-income communities and strategies to address those impacts. The Secretary for Environmental Protection shall consult with the Natural Resources Agency, the Transportation Agency, the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, and the Office of Planning and Research on the study.

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