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Care for God's Creation

News from the Stockton Diocese Environmental Justice Project

Our chance to plan San Joaquin's future

I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in.

George Washington Carver

As the Central Valley grows, where will people live? Where will they work? How will they get from place to place? Residents in San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties can help decide those answers over the next few months. This unique opportunity is the result of a new California law.

In 2008, an unprecedented coalition of developers, environmentalists, affordable housing advocates and local government leaders came together to support passage of SB 375, the Sustainable Communities Strategy law. SB 375 encourages local governments and transportation agencies to work together to develop a coordinated regional approach to addressing the transportation, housing and environmental challenges that no single city can tackle on its own.

As part of SB 375, the California Air Resources Board (ARB) adopted targets for greenhouse gas reductions for each region of the state. Each region is now responsible for working with its local government partners and stakeholders to create a Sustainable Communities Strategy. In October 2012, the ARB will review the SB 375 greenhouse gas reduction targets for the San Joaquin Valley. In preparation for that, Valley counties have been updating their models and building scenarios.

Catholic Charities in the Stockton Diocese will begin work with a coalition of local planning, health, and environmental justice groups to make sure that traditionally under-represented communities are part of the effort to build these Sustainable Communities Strategies for San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties.

Are you interested in learning more? Would you like to be involved in shaping the future of your neighborhood, your city, your county? Please contact Betsy Reifsnider, the Environmental Justice Director at Catholic Charities, at: betsyr@ccstockton.org or call 209-444-5925.

For more background, read about ClimatePlan, a coalition of health, farmland preservation, public transit, and community groups working for sustainable, equitable development in California. www.climateplan.org

In this issue:

- SB 375: Sustainable Communities Strategy takes hold
- American Lung Association annual State of the Air report card
- Spring reading list



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Stockton Diocese air improves, but still rates "F"

In April, the American Lung Association released "State of the Air 2012," an annual report on air quality which lists both the cleanest and most polluted areas in the country. This year's report shows that although California, including the Central Valley and Sierra Foothills, still has some of the worst air in the nation, continuous progress in reducing ozone and particulate pollution has resulted in the state's cleanest air quality since the Lung Association's annual report began 13 years ago.

More than 90 percent of Californians still live in counties plagued with unhealthy air, particularly in the Central Valley, Los Angeles, Inland Empire, Sacramento, and San Diego. That means more people are at risk for asthma attacks, heart attacks, and premature death. California cities once again dominate lists for the top ten most polluted areas in the nation for ozone (smog) and short-term and annual particle pollution.

Find the rankings for counties in the Stockton Diocese, as well as regional fact sheets and maps are available at www.lung.org/california

Spring reading list

- "The Environment: by Pope Benedict XVI," published by Our Sunday Visitor, is an unprecedented collection of excerpts from what the Holy Father has said regarding the environment. It is a treasure trove of insights and inspiration surrounding the Church and the world in which we live. For more information, go to: www.osv.com
- "Putting Energy into Stewardship: Congregations Guide" comes from the U.S. Department of Energy. Go to www.energystar.gov and type "congregations" into the search engine.
- "Cooler Smarter: Practical Steps for Low-Carbon Living" is published by Union of Concerned Scientists. It's a consumer-oriented book based on an in-depth, two-year effort to determine the most effective actions individual Americans can take to reduce their carbon emissions. To order, go to: www.ucsusa.org

Websites to Care for Creation:

**Catholic Charities, Stockton
Diocese:** www.ccstockton.org

**National Catholic Rural Life
Conference:** www.ncrlc.com

Catholic Climate Covenant:
www.catholicclimatecovenant.org

About the Stockton Diocese Environmental Justice Project...

Since 2005, the Environmental Justice Project has worked "to educate and motivate Catholics to a deeper reverence and respect for God's creation, and to engage local parishes in activities aimed at dealing with environmental problems, particularly as they affect the poor." The Project brings a unique Catholic voice to the public policy debate in the Central Valley and Sierra Nevada.