



**United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
“Air Pollution Challenges for California’s Inland Empire”
Wednesday October 10th, 2007 San Bernardino CA**

Testimony Provided by:

Adrian Martinez

Project Attorney, Southern California Air Quality Project

Natural Resources Defense Council

1314 Second St.

Santa Monica, CA 90401

amartinez@nrdc.org

Good morning. My name is Adrian Martinez, and I work for the Natural Resources Defense Council, the NRDC. NRDC is a national, nonprofit, public interest organization dedicated to protecting human health and the environment. We have over 1.2 million members and online activists in all 50 states. Specifically, I am an attorney for NRDC’s Southern California Air Quality Project, which focuses on bringing clean, healthful air to Southern California. Today, I am going to discuss some of the challenges facing Southern California in regards to air pollution and potential solutions to these challenges.

As you are well aware, the South Coast Air Basin, which includes much of the inland empire, has some of the most intractable air pollution problems in the nation. This pollution contributes to a myriad of health problems, which affects all of us, but especially the sensitive members of our communities, such as children. In August of this year, the Committee on Environment and Public Works heard testimony during a field hearing on port pollution from Dr. Ed Avol from USC’s Keck School of Medicine. As Dr. Avol aptly stated, “every child deserves a healthy start, a chance for their lungs and respiratory system to fully develop and provide them with the capacity and capability to breathe.” However, as he noted during that hearing, many children do not have an equal chance to have a healthy start. This statement not only applies to children residing near the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, but also children all along the goods movement chain in Southern California, which includes the inland empire.

NRDC and several other environmental and community groups throughout the State have pushed hard for strong State and local regulations to combat harmful smog and particulate pollution. Even with this advocacy and several successes over the years, the air quality picture in Southern California proves to be quite challenging.

Most recently, the South Coast Air Quality Management District (“SCAQMD” or “District”) and the California Air Resources Board (“CARB”) came together to develop a clean air plan as required by the Clean Air Act. As part of that clean air plan, these agencies have requested that this region bump up to the “extreme” classification to meet the clean air standard for ozone (or smog as it is more commonly known). The “extreme” classification is reserved for the most polluted areas in the nation. While this classification seems to provide great job security for air quality advocates like myself, it offers the State and residents an unfavorable tradeoff. The extreme classification allows use of something called the “black box,” which means that many of the actual approaches to meeting federal clean air standards have not been identified and will be developed at a later date. We view use of the “black box” as a deferral of the District/CARB responsibility to achieve the federal standards, during which time residents of both regions will continue to breathe dangerously high levels of air pollutants.

In essence, under CARB and SCAQMD’s most recent smog plan, we will not meet federal clean air standards until 2024—meaning that a child born today in the Southland will have to wait until her senior year in high school before breathing clean air. This is too long a period to wait for clean air in our region.

At this critical juncture for air quality in Southern California, the appropriate question is whether or not our federal, state and local regulators doing everything they can to battle this harmful air pollution that causes or contributes to thousands of premature deaths and other health impacts each year. While we applaud the progress that several agencies have made over the years, we note that there is still much more that needs to be done.

Thus, the following four things provide a quick sampling of major shifts that need to occur in the upcoming years to put this region on the path to clean, healthy air.

- First, this region must figure out how to address pollution from freight transport. It is no secret that this region serves as the major goods movement hub in the nation. Along with the economic benefits from these activities come severe pollution impacts that harm residents' health. Stated bluntly, the current system has residents subsidizing the movement of freight through their health. It is possible to have a vibrant goods movement industry that does not produce vast amounts of pollution. As trade is predicted to double or triple in the upcoming decade and a half, places like the inland empire will face increased air pollution from distribution centers and railyard activities. We need a regional approach to cleaning up this pollution, and we need to make sure pollution reductions are occurring throughout the entire goods movement system.
- Second, we need to rethink how we transport our freight. We need innovative transportation projects and the commitment and funding to make those projects happen. Tomorrow's goods movement system should seek to move away from the conventional diesel truck and train. While diesel engines are becoming significantly cleaner, our region's size and the volume of trade through our state requires us to look to alternative technologies that can transport goods in a manner that produces zero emissions. Simply put, instead of solely investing in old technology, we need to look to a 21st century clean system to transport goods.
- Third, we need additional dollars to take old, polluting vehicles off the road and replace them with less polluting vehicles. The success of several programs, including the Carl Moyer Program, demonstrates that taking old diesel engines out of service can pay huge dividends through reduced pollution.
- Finally, we need greater inter-agency cooperation. CARB and SCAQMD recently came together in a great feat of interagency cooperation to improve the plan to meet the federal PM2.5 clean air standard in the Southland. This partnership demonstrates that when agencies roll up their sleeves and work together, they can more effectively battle harmful smog and particulate pollution. We need these agencies, in addition to local cities and the federal

government, to come together to figure out how to create air quality solutions that work for Southern California.

In closing, I want to note that the great challenges of air pollution in our region provide great opportunities for success. We need significant leadership from all levels of government to truly combat air pollution in the Southland. This great part of California should not be known by phrases such as “smog capitol of the nation” and the “diesel death zone.” We need to alter those labels through smart, swift action to clean up the air.

Thank you.