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# Care for God's Creation

*News from the Stockton Diocese Environmental Justice Project*

## Human Right to Water bills pass first hurdle

"There is need for awareness that the mountains and rivers and all living things, the sky and its sun and moon and clouds all constitute a healing, sustaining sacred presence for humans which they need as much for their psychic integrity as for their physical nourishment."

- Thomas Berry

**By Jamie Hansen, California Watch, May 3, 2011.** Two years ago former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed a bill that would have made access to clean water a legislative mandate. Now community advocates and legislators are trying again.

The Human Right to Water package – consisting of six bills – would expand efforts to improve water quality. Proponents say incorporating a basic human right to water into state water policy would help eradicate pollution problems that have plagued communities throughout California.

Changes include requiring water agencies to post health warnings in multiple languages and improving access to funding for cleaning up contaminated water. Last week all six bills passed state Senate and Assembly committees and are headed to the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Note: At April's Catholic Advocacy Day, Stockton Diocese leaders spoke to legislators about these bills. In his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI urged Catholics to "cultivate a public conscience that considers food and access to water as universal rights of all human beings, without distinction or discrimination."

### **In this issue:**

- Human Right to Water bills move forward
- Pollution costs children and their families
- State of San Joaquin Valley rivers
- New air quality tool for farms

## Children's health problems cost U.S. \$76 billion

**Wednesday, May 4, 2011 (HealthDay News)** -- Children's health problems caused by air pollution, exposure to toxic chemicals and other environmental pollutants cost the United States \$76.6 billion in 2008, a new study finds. That was 3.5 percent of the nation's total health-care costs that year, compared with 2.8 percent in 1997, said researchers from the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine and colleagues.

They examined the cost of childhood cancer and chronic conditions such as asthma, autism, attention deficit disorder, and intellectual disability linked at least in part to toxins and contaminants in the water, air, soil and food, as well as in homes and neighborhoods. Read more at the U.S. EPA website at:

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/ochp/ochpweb.nsf/content/tips.htm>



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Websites to Care for  
Creation:

**National Catholic Rural Life Conference:** [www.ncrlc.com](http://www.ncrlc.com)

**CatholicClimateCovenant**  
[catholicclimatecovenant.org](http://catholicclimatecovenant.org)

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## What makes a good river? Opinions vary.

**By Alex Breitler, Stockton Record, May 3, 2011.**

STOCKTON - How does one grade a river? Farmers might ask if it provides a reliable source of water for their crops. Fishermen might ask if it provides habitat for salmon or steelhead. Neighbors might ask if there is public access, maybe a nice walking trail.

Four rivers transect portions of San Joaquin County, and local leaders and advocates gathered Monday in a unique effort to evaluate those streams - subjective though their grading might be.

The results of anonymous evaluations will be summarized in an upcoming white paper. But it's already clear there is a wide range of opinion about the well-being of the San Joaquin, Mokelumne, Calaveras and Stanislaus rivers.

Take the Calaveras, a nursery for threatened steelhead and a primary source of water for Stockton. The Stockton East Water District, which takes and processes that water, gives the Calaveras a glowing "green light" in all but one area: fish passage. Advocacy group Friends of the Lower Calaveras gives the Calaveras a cautionary "yellow light" or a problematic "red light" when it comes to river awareness, public access and the amount of silt and sedimentation in the water...

"We really hope to start an annual tradition with this," said Jeremy Terhune of Friends of the Lower Calaveras, which organized the State of Our Rivers symposium one day after hosting an inaugural Stockton Steelhead Festival.

For the full story and to see the results of the evaluations, visit Alex Breitler's blog at [recordnet.com/breitlerblog](http://recordnet.com/breitlerblog).

## Farmers have new online air-quality tool

**Dairy Herd Network:** More than 20 university professionals and 15 partner agencies joined forces to create the National Air Quality Site Assessment Tool (NAQSAT), a method for determining where air-quality improvement opportunities exist on-farm. NAQSAT was developed mainly for educational purposes, and using it is completely voluntary, explains Deanne Meyer, livestock waste management specialist at the University of California-Davis, who helped design the tool. For information, go to: <http://www.dairyherd.com/dairy-herd/profit-tips/New-online-air-quality-tool-2-117405778.html?ref=778>

### *About the Stockton Diocese Environmental Justice Project...*

The Environmental Justice Project works "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." We bring a unique Catholic voice to California's public policy debate.