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Report: California carbon tax hikes gas prices 11 cents

By JONATHAN J. COOPER
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO — The California Legislature’s non-partisan analyst estimates the state’s pollution tax has raised gasoline prices by 11 cents per gallon and diesel prices by 13 cents, according to a month-old letter released on April 7.

The pollution tax costs drivers collectively about \$2 billion a year, Legislative Analyst Mac Taylor said. His staff calculated the estimate in response to questions from Assemblyman Tom Lackey, R-Palmdale, who is pushing legislation that would require the state to report more detailed information about the costs to drivers.

“These impartial estimates confirm that Californians are paying significantly higher prices,” Lackey said in a statement.

Consumers may not have noticed much impact at the pump because the pollution tax came at a time when gas prices were plummeting nationally. The U.S. average for a gallon of gasoline dropped from \$3.26 per gallon at the beginning of 2014 to \$2.14 a year later, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

California launched the pollution-restriction program in 2012 and began applying it to gas and diesel last year. Known as “cap-and-trade,” the program is designed to control emissions of heat-trapping gases and to spur investment in clean technologies. It limits how much pollution businesses can spew, making them buy permits.

The program creates a marketplace for carbon emissions and incentives to reduce greenhouse gases. The marketplace puts a price on carbon emissions and caps how much individual polluters are allowed to release. Businesses are required to either cut emissions to the cap levels or buy allowances from other companies for each metric ton of carbon spewed over the cap each year.

The carbon-reduction program generates billions of dollars a year for efforts to fight climate change. A large portion of the money is dedicated to California’s high-speed rail line and other transportation projects.

Stanley Young, a spokesman for the Air Resources Board, which administers the program, said the estimate of a price spike of 11 to 13 cents is consistent with expectations.

“These proceeds are pumped right back into California — including the most disadvantaged communities — as investments that help clean the air, support the cleanest vehicles for all Californians, and promote safer and more livable neighborhoods,” Young said.

The gas-price analysis by the Legislative Analyst’s Office assumed that oil companies passed the entire cost to consumers, but Young said there’s no requirement that fuel suppliers do so.

The analysis was based on the \$12.73-per-ton price for allowances in the most recent auction, held in February. It says some people paying the higher gas prices will ultimately benefit from the money it generates.

Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown, a vocal advocate for reducing carbon emissions, has proposed spending \$3.1 billion of money from the program on initiatives that include incentives for electric vehicles, transit programs and biofuel subsidies.

Almond growers, beekeepers urged to report hive damage

By TIM HEARDEN
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — The Almond Board of California is urging growers and beekeepers to provide data about their hive deployments to help research aimed at preventing honeybee die-offs.

The board wants bee producers to complete a survey sent out in recent weeks by the California State Beekeepers Association and other groups to assist a study primarily funded by the USDA.

Further, if a grower observed what appeared to be pesticide-related impacts to hives during this year’s bloom, he or she should report the damage to county officials so a record could be kept of incidents, the board advises.

It is especially important to gather information about pesticide application timings and conditions, product names and active ingredients, the board said in a news release.

“Incidents affecting honeybee health have been in the news lately, and Almond Board is appealing to almond growers to report information to county agricultural com-



Courtesy of Kathy Keatley Garvey/UC-Davis
University of California-Davis Extension apiculturist Elina Nino, center, checks a bee observation hive with Solano County fairs president James Fuller during an Ag Day celebration in March. The Almond Board of California is asking growers to submit data as part of an ongoing honeybee research project.

missioners ... as their part in an ongoing investigation into the cause,” board spokeswoman Linda Romander said in an email.

The request for information follows a quick and vi-

brant blossom in February and early March that industry insiders initially said was relatively trouble-free, although some reports have since surfaced of beekeepers encountering losses of immature bee

broods at the close of this year’s bloom.

While this year’s bloom-related losses weren’t nearly as severe as in 2014, when a mixture of fungicides used by almond growers and

insecticides applied to field crops killed millions of bees, they came after a rough winter in which some beekeepers reported significant losses.

In late 2014, the almond board and bee experts developed a best-practices checklist for growers and beekeepers during the harvest, including removing bees from orchards before petal fall to avoid having them wander off. While most hives had been removed near the end of this year’s bloom, a few hives were still in orchards as of the last week of March, according to the board.

Bee activity during the blossom was monitored closely by researchers from the nationwide Bee Informed Partnership, whose aim is to help beekeepers improve the strength of their hives, the California Farm Bureau Federation reported.

The almond board is actively working with beekeepers and government agencies to investigate affected hives.

To facilitate their investigation, growers and beekeepers can contact Bob Curtis, the almond board’s director of agricultural affairs, at rcurtis@almondboard.com or (209) 343-3216.

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