

## Fresno, Valley in line for greenhouse-gas funding

By Mark Grossi



The Darling rendering plant is seen at center from Hyde Park, a neighborhood park in southwest Fresno that was labeled the riskiest place to live in California in a 2013 statewide survey because of a variety of environmental concerns.

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State leaders announced Friday that more than \$200 million in greenhouse gases cap-and-trade money would be invested in the census tracts of California's most disadvantaged communities — about 20% of which are in the San Joaquin Valley.

In a ranking of the census tracts earlier this year, Fresno had more than a dozen of the 20 worst places in the state, focused primarily in downtown, south and west. Other Valley locations included Selma.

The state money for these census tracts would be used for energy efficiency, public transit, affordable housing and greenhouse gas-cutting measures, but there is concern in the Valley that most of the money might wind up in other parts of the the state.

Funding distribution, which is still being worked out through local agencies, will depend on guidelines, which may focus on places rich in transit or transportation alternatives and high population density. Those competitive guidelines would not favor the Valley, according to the Leadership Council for Justice and Accountability in Fresno.

The council and Self Help Enterprises of Visalia are part of a coalition of statewide activists, called the Rural Smart Growth Task Force, trying to represent such areas.

“We maintain that fair geographic distribution will not occur without a set-aside for rural communities and small cities,” the coalition said in a recent letter.

The announcement about the \$200 million on Friday by the California Environmental Protection Agency identified the census tracts where the money would go. The tracts are in communities that have the biggest environmental risks, according to [studies done by the state’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment](#).

“This is a unique opportunity to improve public health and quality of life for people living in communities that suffer disproportionately from environmental contamination,” said CalEPA Secretary Matthew Rodriguez.

The rankings of the 8,000 census tracts across the state are based on risks in the categories of air, water, pesticides, poverty, language barriers and several other factors.

The money comes from the \$832 million raised from industries that were purchasing credits to help achieve a cap on greenhouse gases. State law requires 25% of the money must go to census tracts that qualify as the most disadvantaged places.

Los Angeles and the Bay Area, both of which have higher population densities than the Valley, have census tracts on the list.

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