

## Pollution program fails

### Industrial plants choose not to reduce emissions

HOUSTON (AP) — A law backed by Texas Gov. George W. Bush asking older industrial plants to voluntarily reduce pollution levels has no takers, more than a year after the program's creation, a state agency says.

A draft report by the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) that shows no major industrial facilities have obtained voluntary permits or reduced emissions.

"This is exactly what environmentalists and the public health community predicted would be the outcome of reliance on a voluntary approach," Ken Kramer, the Sierra Club's state director, told the Houston Chronicle in Thursday's editions.

Bush, the Republican presidential nominee who has established a transition team even as Vice President Al Gore has challenged the election count, frequently cited the program of grandfathered polluters during his campaign as one method he has used to cut Texas emissions.

The TNRCC draft report issued Wednesday shows 37 companies have applied for the voluntary permits, while 125 others have promised in writing to apply by the program's expiration on Sept. 1, 2001.

"What this report shows is that there has been a substantial level of activity dealing with these grandfathered facilities, though not so much yet in

the pure (voluntary permit) arena," said TNRCC Chairman Robert Huston.

He said the voluntary program has helped "raise the attention level" of industry officials about grandfathered emissions — a carrot that complements the stick in other programs.

In October, representatives of the Texas Air Crisis Campaign said the 1999 voluntary law resulted in a barely measurable reduction in pollution and proposed repealing or toughening the law next legislative session.

The current legislation applied to an estimated 800 industrial plants built before 1971, when the state adopted new environmental regulations. Before the law, grandfathered plants produced an estimated 900,000 tons a year or 36 percent of the state's industrial pollution.

The earlier report said that, since the law went into effect Sept. 1, 1999, eligible plants reduced emissions by only 0.3 percent. Ralph Marquez, a TNRCC commissioner who worked for a chemical company for 30 years, said earlier that reductions from grandfathered plants were better than that figure.

The new TNRCC report says that because of other mandatory state programs, including proposed smog-reduction plans for Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth, about 23 percent of emissions from major grandfathered facilities will be eliminated.

## Armed patrols planned for border

HOUSTON (AP) — Armed patrols near the Mexican border are planned next year by a group of North Texas volunteers in the wake of an immigrant's shooting death.

Members of the group, Ranch Rescue, say they will help protect private property in Kinney County from what South Texas ranchers are calling immigrant trespassers.

However, Ranch Rescue leader Jack Foote denied that his property-rights group chose the sparsely populated county for patrols next spring because a Mexican immigrant was shot there last May after asking a landowner for water.

"We go where we are invited," Foote, a former U.S. Army captain, told the Houston Chronicle in Thursday's editions.

Foote said he has no sympathy for trespassers. His Arlington-based group produced a flier urging "volunteers from all over the USA" to meet in the area around Brackettville and Eagle Pass, Texas. Ranch Rescue volunteers last month ran patrols in Arizona with ranchers along the border.

"I think they ought to stay in Arlington," said Tom Lee, the district attorney in Del Rio, whose office covers Kinney

County. "They don't know a damn thing about our situation down here."

Area residents say immigrants have damaged fences and burglarized unattended hunting camps. But they agree that outsiders are not needed to fix the problem.

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Del Rio district attorney

"I can't imagine who came up with that idea," said Marjorie Wilson, who owns a ranch east of Eagle Pass along with her husband, Charles. "I can tell you we won't be using them. We take care of ourselves."

Wilson praised the U.S. Border Pa-

trol for responding quickly when spot immigrants trespassing on land.

Debate over the tide of illegal immigration across the Texas-Mexico border renewed last May when Enzo Haro, a 23-year-old Mexican immigrant, was shot near the home of Samuel Blackwood.

A 75-year-old retiree, Blackwood confessed to the shooting, which occurred off his property, law officials said. Blackwood has been charged with murder and will face trial next year, according to the Mexican national.

A \$15 million wrongful-death suit against Blackwood. Ranch Rescue members requested doctors, mechanics, cooks, guards and heavy equipment operators to build a camp during weeks of the patrol, dubbed "Eagle."

After armed patrols by ranchers, officials there termed the practice to be "cacerolazo" — immigrant hunting.

The intelligence division of Immigration and Naturalization Service distributed a confidential warning of the Texas group's aims.

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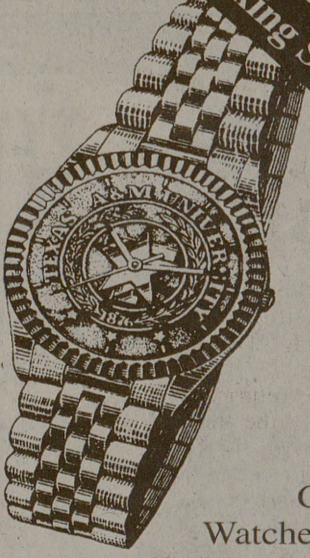
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