

HISTORY OF THE SACRAMENTO VALLEY AIR BASIN AGRICULTURAL BURNING MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (aka SMP)

The Sacramento Valley is one of the most productive rice growing regions in the world. Besides prodigious rice yields, the fields produce vast quantities of straw residue and have ubiquitous disease problems. Historically, burning was the best method to remove the straw and combat disease. During the 1970s, occasional, dense, smoke incursions into the Sacramento Metropolitan Area from rice straw burning made headlines in the Bee and reports included quotes from ARB and local air district officials blaming each other for the problem. The working relationship between State and local air agencies was strained.

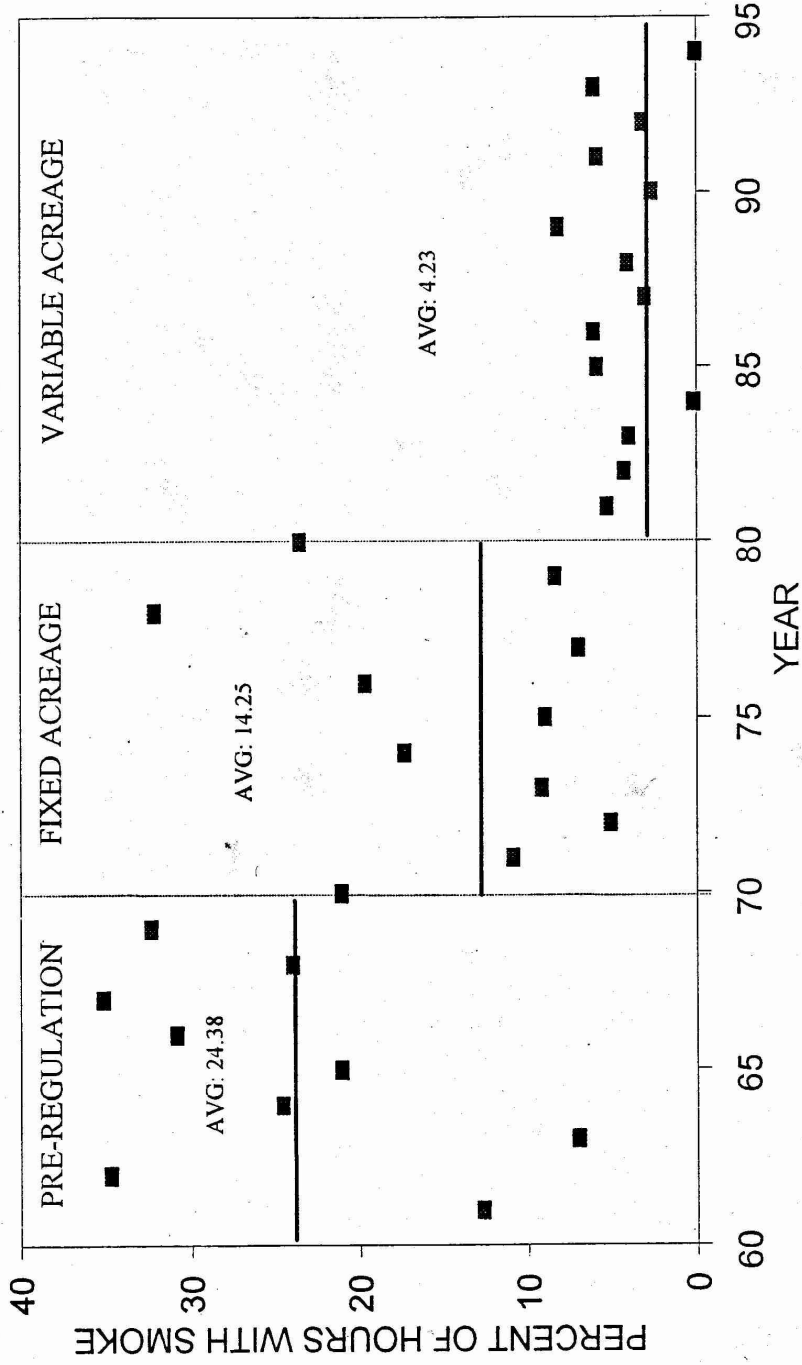
This untenable situation from smoke impacts in the Sacramento urban area prompted a proposal in January of 1981 to the Rice Research Board to fund an experimental program. The proposal included using new burning management procedures and computers to collect, evaluate and share data among all air agencies. The Rice Research Board agreed to fund not only Fife Environmental, but also the Basin Control Council, local air districts and Nowcasting. A subcommittee of APCOs was established consisting of Al Perrin, Earnie Vickrey and Ed Romano. Dave McBride, Joe McIntyre and Les Fife provided staff assistance. We met weekly for three months to develop the program details, purchase computer equipment, write software and train air district personnel. The Apple II computers had only two floppy drives for storage and 300 baud modems to transmit data files. Our backup was a programmable HP calculator (which we never had to use).

Significant program elements included more burn days, variable acreage allocations, access to realtime air quality and meteorological information, revised burn hours, an intensive educational effort and more local authority and responsibility. The experimental burning management program produced positive results for all concerned. The public saw air quality improvements and growers were pleased by less air impacts and more burn days. Two years after the experimental program began the ARB adopted the program into State regulations. In 1991 the SVAB Control Council was sued as part of an effort to pass a legislative bill to reduce rice straw burning. The 1991 Rice Straw Burning Reduction Act was passed with rice industry support. The phasedown law had a schedule of approximately 10 percent reductions in burning each year. A revision to the law in 1996 modified the schedule and instituted separate fall and spring burning acreage limitations. In 2003, the current program of a 25 percent limit or 125,000 acres maximum burning became effective.

The following two pages contain:

- 1) A plot of the smoke hours recorded at Sacramento Executive Airport over three and a half decades
- 2) A comparison of various air quality, meteorological and burning factors from the fall burn program
- 3) Information on the rice straw burning phasedown law

SMOKY HOURS AT SACRAMENTO OCTOBER - NOVEMBER



TSD/MET/JINW/2-95

FIFE ENVIRONMENTAL
Sacramento Valley - Fall Agricultural Burning Program 1980 - 2000

BJI	CEY	Y	BA	RTG	RcS	RaTU	crz	R	tsz	ER	S	4S	Er	CE	4tr	Er	CE	Rt	b	6uc	z	v	f	Er	
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BJJE	EHA-JAC	BHE-CCF	DH?AA	DA?AA
BJJF	EHE-HDG	BJD-HBC	EA?A	EA?AA
BJJG	EJI-EGI	CGB-I EJ	FC?D	FA?AA
BJJH	FBE-EGD	DCA-JJI	GC?DJ	GC?AA
BJJI	EJB-FHI	DBD-BI D	GD?HB	GA?AA
BJJJ	FDH-HI F	DDH DA	GD?AA	GC?AA
CAAA	FGHEFC	DI A-EGJ	GH?AA	GF?AA