Are Gov. Brown's new pollution standards realistic?

Environmentalists praise bills, but others call plans too aggressive.

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Organizations fighting for clean air are praising Gov. Jerry Brown's new climate change legislation as a step in the right direction, but others say his plans are too aggressive.

Reducing emissions at the level the governor cites is possible, said Juliann Emmons Allison, associate director of UC Riverside’s Center for Sustainable Development. “It’s just a matter of how aggressive we want to be.”

Allison said conservation efforts will be crucial as well as aggressively supporting solar, wind, and other forms of clean energy.

Brown on Thursday, Sept. 8, signed legislation that aims to reduce emissions 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030, which the governor called the most aggressive target enacted by any government in North America.

These new standards were enacted about five months after the governing board of Southern California’s regional air quality agency voted 7-6 to fire its long-standing executive officer amid concerns from the board’s new Republican majority that the agency needs to be more business friendly.

Sam Atwood, a spokesman for the air district, said reducing greenhouse gases as called for in Brown’s plan would also bring down nitrogen oxide levels, “which is needed to achieve clean air goals in our 2016 Air Quality Management Plan.”

He said the agency will seek greenhouse gas mitigation fees made available from the legislation to fund incentive programs in the air basin, which stretches from the Pacific Ocean to the San Bernardino Mountains.

Some officials representing industries affected by environmental regulations are wary
of Brown’s plans.

“A lot of this legislation is always the glass half-full type of legislation. It's optimistic legislation. It’s stretched goal-setting,” said Frank Maisano, a Washington, D.C.-based energy expert for the Bracewell & Giuliani law firm, which represents companies and industries affected by environmental regulations.

Although Maisano admits that California is seen as the leader in the greenhouse-gas reduction effort, he said it's difficult for many industries to meet certain standards “when you keep adding additional things on.”

Added Maisano: “The reality is a lot of the costs have already been built into the California market. Manufacturing is not really as big a factor ... You’re already not using coal in many places. I think the biggest question you have (is) how nuclear will continue to play a role.”

Western States Petroleum Association President Catherine Reheis-Boyd said the governor and the state legislature “have ushered in the most aggressive greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals in the world.”

Reheis-Boyd said the Legislature declined to provide state regulators and stakeholders with a “cost-effective and efficient cap-and-trade program to achieve its stated goals.”

Without the proper tools, we remain concerned about the impacts to California energy consumers and our shared economic vitality,” she added.

She said the Western States Petroleum Association and its member companies will continue to review and comment on the California Air Resources Board’s strategies to implement the Legislature's direction outlined in the two new pieces of legislation.
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It is ridiculous. I know California has some of the worst air quality but it's efforts to control pollution has made things worse. The mandate for diesel exhaust fluid while cutting the black smoke has also cut fuel efficiency and engine quality. Now this def exhaust has trucks spreading essentially pesticides all over the country into the air. Traded one evil for a worse evil. What CA needs to do is get a large number of cars off the road. They need to invest in public transportation systems that actually work.

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