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Project Uses Rice Straw to Make Paper

SACRAMENTO - The Air Resources Board (ARB) announced today that Sacramento Valley rice straw will be made into paper in Canada to determine whether rice straw is viable as a paper pulp material. The project is being coordinated by ARB with support from several state and local groups.

"This project is an important step in finding new and innovative ways to use rice straw. This is exactly the type of opportunity we hoped for when we suggested a pause in the spring burn season," said ARB Chairman, John Dunlap.

Approximately 28 tons of rice straw will be delivered to Vulcan, Alberta, Canada and be processed into pulp by Canadian Flax Pulp, Ltd. of Vancouver, Canada, who has had success in turning wheat straw into paper. The rice straw will be made into paper at a Canadian paper mill and returned to California.

Several of the state's newspapers, including the Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle and the Sacramento Bee are interested in using rice paper as an insert to test the quality of the paper for possible future use.

As newsprint and paper prices in general have escalated, rice straw as an alternative pulp resource could be a boon to the printing industry, while relieving farmers of an agricultural waste product and allowing for an alternative to open burning.

Rice straw burning is one of the most criticized forms of air pollution in the Sacramento Valley. Making paper out of rice straw will not only help California citizens breathe easier, but give rice farmers a way to make a profit out of selling the waste.

"We take very seriously that we must get alternatives on line so we can use rice straw in commercially productive ways besides burning. The Lung Association is very supportive and appreciative of the people who are making this happen," said Jane Hagedorn, Executive Director of the Sacramento chapter of the American Lung Association.

The project, facilitated by ARB, is supported by the Rice Research Group, American Lung Association, Family Water Lines, Colusa County Farm Bureau, Colusa County Board of Supervisors, Glenn County Farm Bureau, Wilderness Unlimited, Sacramento Valley Air Basin Control Council, Economic Development Corp., Valley Truck and Tractor, Allis Auto Parts, W.A. Baggett, and Larry Middleton.

The Air Resources Board is a department of the California Environmental Protection Agency. ARB's mission is to promote and

protect public health, welfare, and ecological resources through effective reduction of air pollutants while recognizing and considering effects on the economy. The ARB oversees all air pollution control efforts in California to attain and maintain health based air quality standards.

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