Air Pollution in the San Joaquin Valley

The San Joaquin Valley has some of the most polluted air and accounts for the second worst air quality region in the United States. In the San Joaquin Valley, the mountain ranges trap air pollution in, where an inversion layer forms while keeping air contaminants confined and in high concentrations, especially on warm and hot summer days. Some of the main contributors to air pollution are agriculture, oil drilling operations, large industries, and traffic along interstate 5, and highway 99. There are roughly 3.9 million people in the San Joaquin Valley that are exposed to some of the nation’s most polluted air. For example, fine particulate matter known as PM 2.5 causes health problems such as asthma to premature deaths. Also, breathing in ground level ozone is dangerous as it can trigger a variety of health problems like throat irritation, chest pain, and congestion, and can lead to severe lung damage making infants, and the elderly more vulnerable to health effects.

A smoggy day in California’s Central Valley in January-2015, Earth Justice

Oil drilling operation in Bakersfield, California- SF Chronicle, 2017