

Notice of Preparation of a Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report (State Clearinghouse #2020090207)

Date: April 28, 2021

To: Responsible Agencies, Interested Parties and Organizations

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Recirculated Environmental Impact Report (State Clearinghouse #2020090207) for the Kamm Avenue Pistachio Processing Plant Project (County EIR No. 7896, Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3685 and Variance Application No. 4085)

Lead Agency: County of Fresno

Project Applicant: Kamm Avenue Pistachio Processing, LLC

Contact: David Randall, Senior Planner
County of Fresno – Department of Public Works and Planning
2220 Tulare St. 6th Floor
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 600-4540
drandall@fresnocountyca.gov

Project Title: Kamm Avenue Pistachio Processing Plant

Notice is Hereby Given: The County of Fresno (County) is the Lead Agency on the below-described Kamm Avenue Pistachio Processing Plant Project (Project) and has prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Recirculated Environmental Impact Report (EIR), pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines. Previously, an NOP was prepared for the proposed Project and was properly noticed and circulated pursuant to CEQA Guidelines for public review from September 14, 2020 – November 2, 2020. Public scoping meetings were held on September 28, 2020 and October 19, 2020. Following the NOP review period and scoping meetings, the Draft EIR was prepared and was circulated for public review from February 17, 2021 – April 4, 2021. The Draft EIR has not been certified by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors. Pursuant to Section 15088.5 of the CEQA Guidelines, a Lead Agency is required to recirculate an EIR when significant new information is added to the EIR after public notice is given of the availability of the Draft EIR for public review but before certification. The County has reviewed comments on the Draft EIR, and the request by the Applicant to recirculate the Draft EIR to provide additional detailed information about the processing equipment requested by commenters, and has determined to exercise its discretion to initiate preparation of a Recirculated Draft EIR.

This NOP is being provided to solicit the views of the public, interested parties, and/or agencies as to the scope and content of the Recirculated Draft EIR. Specifically, the County is requesting that commenters provide comments on the NOP, identify additional environmental topics (and/or special studies) that they believe need to be explored in the forthcoming Recirculated Draft EIR, and to identify other relevant environmental issues related to the scope and content of the forthcoming Recirculated Draft EIR.

Project Location: The proposed processing plant components of the Project would be located on two parcels totaling approximately 315.8 acres, on the south side of Kamm Avenue, approximately one mile west of Highway 33, and approximately 4.0 miles east of Interstate 5 in the western portion of unincorporated Fresno County (portions of Assessor's Parcel Numbers 38-300-17S and 038-300-30S). Although pistachio hulls and related excess materials from pistachio processing would be reused, some greenwaste may need

to be placed on land and tilled into the soil. The Project also includes a greenwaste site component located west of the site (APN 038-300-14S). The unincorporated community of Three Rocks, a U.S. Census designated place, is located approximately 1.5 miles to the southeast of the proposed Project site. See Figure 1 – Regional Location Map and Figure 2 – Project Vicinity Map.

Project Description: Kamm Avenue Pistachio Processing, LLC (Applicant) is proposing to construct and operate a pistachio processing facility to process nuts from nearby orchards and other areas. The Applicant proposes to construct, operate, and maintain a pistachio processing plant with three huller lines with an average annual processing capacity of 60 million pounds of pistachios. The Project would provide pistachio processing capacity in the immediate vicinity of existing pistachio orchards that currently ship harvested crops for processing to more remote locations, including processing plants located outside of Fresno County. The Project would operate year-round to package and process harvested pistachios for retail and wholesale customers. During an approximately 6-week harvest period, which typically occurs from August to October, the Project would operate seven days a week and 24 hours per day to receive, hull, heat, dry and store pistachio crops in onsite storage silos. During non-harvest operations, the Project would operate two shifts per day, five or six days per week depending on pistachio product market conditions. The Project would have a full-time workforce of 60 employees. An additional 60 workers would be employed during the 6-week harvest period. The primary pistachio processing facilities would be located within an approximately 80-acre fenced area bordered by Kamm Avenue to the north and agricultural fields to the south, east and west. Two process water settling and cleaning ponds, each with 50 acre-feet of storage capacity, would be located along the southern border of the site and would be connected to the processing plant via an underground pipeline. Approximately 80 to 90 percent of all water used by the Project will be recaptured, cleaned, and used by local pistachio growers for irrigation.

Major components of the Project would continue to include:

- A 130,000 square foot processing and packing building (approximately 47-feet in height) with appurtenant equipment. A variance is requested to allow the silos to be built in excess of the 35-foot height limit of the Zone District.
- A 15,000 square foot cold storage building.
- Forty-nine (49) storage silos with a base diameter of 48 feet and a height of approximately 65 feet with appurtenant scaffolding and access equipment. A variance is requested to allow the silos to be built in excess of the 35-foot height limit of the Zone District.
- A 21,600 square foot huller canopy and other processing equipment.
- Thirteen (13) natural gas fired column dryers, each with a 27 million British thermal unit per hour capacity.
- A 353,000 gallon process water storage tank and a 70,000 domestic water storage tank.
- An onsite domestic water treatment facility, including a facility control room, domestic water treatment filters, and storage ponds. The proposed location of the storage pond has been moved by the Applicant to be closer to the processing equipment to further reduce energy consumption from management of wastewater flows.
- Utility (natural gas and electric) equipment to provide permanent service to the processing equipment, including onsite utility equipment, and an offsite natural gas line and upgraded electric line. To assure operational capacity of processing equipment during initial harvests, the facility may use propane supplied by trucks until the permanent gas line is constructed.
- Access roads, scales, signage and related facilities for harvest and shipping truck loading and unloading and employee and other vehicular access and parking facilities.

- Other necessary infrastructure for Project operations and maintenance, including a shop building, a chemical storage warehouse, a fire pumphouse, a motor control center, a compressor building, an administration office building, breakroom and supervisor office building, guard shacks, sand and media raw water filters and process water separators and screens.

Scope of the Recirculated Environmental Impact Report: As the Project Description may lead to clarifications and revisions to the environmental analysis included in the previously circulated EIR, the County has elected to recirculate the entire EIR and not just revised chapters or portions of the EIR as permitted by CEQA Guidelines section 15088.5(f). Therefore, the forthcoming Recirculated Draft EIR will address the following CEQA Guidelines Appendix G topics: Aesthetics, Agriculture/Forestry Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities and Service Systems, and Wildfire. The Recirculated Draft EIR will also review Project alternatives as well as cumulative impacts. The environmental baseline for the CEQA analysis will be June 1, 2019, which is prior to the development of existing improvements on the site.

Document Availability and Public Review Timeline: Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response to the NOP for the Recirculated Draft EIR must be sent *no later than 30 days* after receipt of this notice. The review period for the NOP will be from April 28, 2021 to June 1, 2021. Copies of the NOP can be obtained by request to David Randall, whose contact information is given below. Electronic copies can also be accessed on the County's website at: www.co.fresno.ca.us/EIR.

Public Scoping Meeting: In addition to the opportunity to submit written comments, one online public scoping meeting will be held by the County to inform interested parties about the proposed project, and to provide agencies and the public with an opportunity to provide comments on the scope and content of the forthcoming EIR. This meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, May 10, 2021, via an online meeting. Participants can access the meeting either online or by telephone as follows:

Web link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87626640931?pwd=UzZjWk5QT1I0N0pmN3NqS2w1RTFOQT09>

Telephone: 669-900-6833 (toll free)

Meeting ID: 876 2664 0931

Passcode: 064362

Submitting Comments: Comments and suggestions on this NOP as to the appropriate scope of analysis of the Recirculated EIR are invited from all interested parties. Written comments or questions concerning the Recirculated Draft EIR for the proposed Project should be directed to the County of Fresno's Project Planner at the following address by 5:00 p.m. on June 1, 2021. Please include the commenter's full name and address. Please submit comments to:

David Randall, Senior Planner
County of Fresno – Department of Public Works and Planning
2220 Tulare St. 6th Floor
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 600-4052
drandall@fresnocountyca.gov

Figure 1 – Regional Location Map

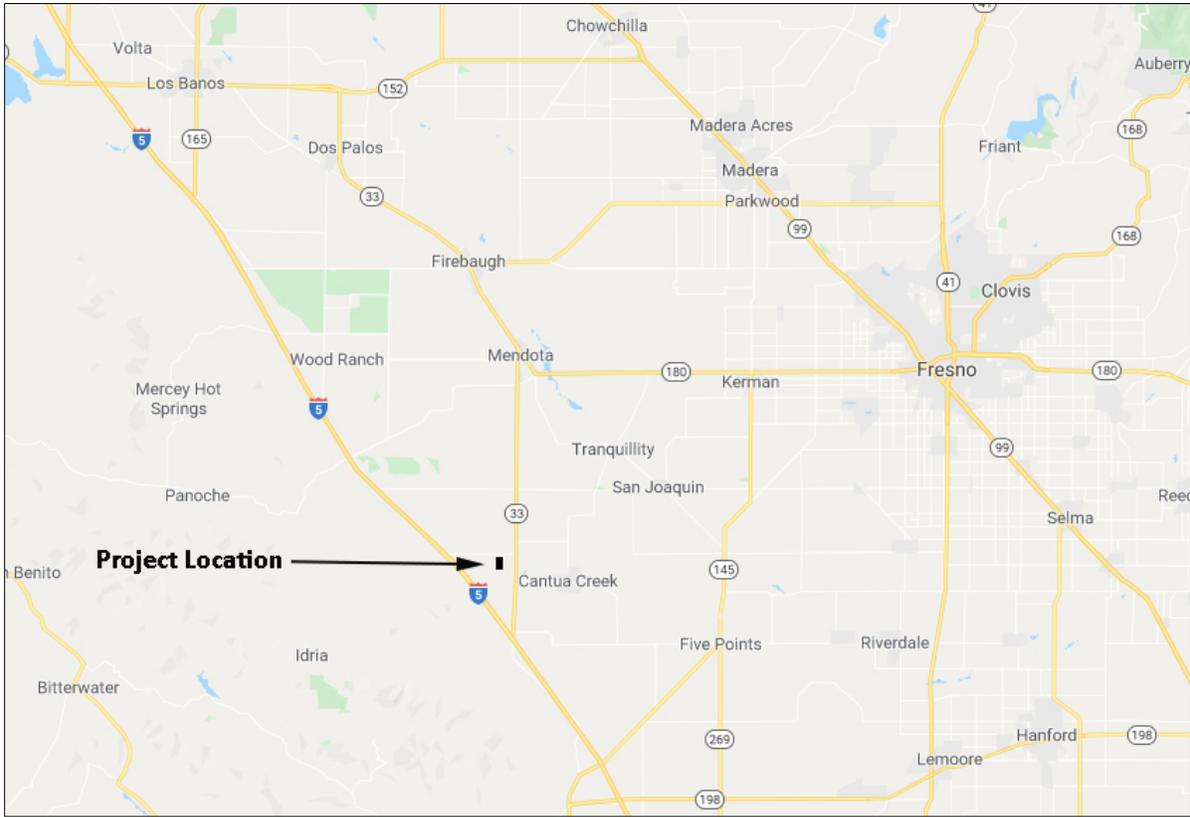


Figure 2 – Project Vicinity Map

