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through 12/26/2020

permit  
SONOMA

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County of Sonoma  
Permit & Resource Management Department

November 25, 2020

Deva Marie Proto, County Clerk

BY:   
Betsy Penn, Deputy Clerk

**NOTICE OF PREPARATION  
of a Draft Environmental Impact Report  
and Notice of December 16, 2020 Public Scoping Meeting**

**Project Title:** Stage Gulch Organics Compost Facility  
**Project Proponent:** NorCal Ag, LLC  
**Project Location:** 2535 Stage Gulch Road, Petaluma, CA 94954  
(Portion of APN 068-040-015)

**Environmental Impact Report**

The Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department (Permit Sonoma) is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Stage Gulch Organics (SGO) Compost Facility (the "Project"). The County will be the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the Project. This Notice of Preparation (NOP) describes the Project that will be analyzed in the EIR and identifies areas of probable environmental effects.

Agencies and interested members of the public are invited to provide input on the scope of the environmental analysis. If you are a responsible or trustee agency, please provide recommendations on the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Due to the time limits mandated by state law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than 30 days after the receipt of this notice.

**Written Comments**

Please submit written comments to any of the below **by 5:00 p.m. on December 28, 2020:**

- Email: [Crystal.Acker@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Crystal.Acker@sonoma-county.org)
- Fax: (707) 565-1103
- Regular Mail: Permit Sonoma, Attn: Crystal Acker  
2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, California 95403

**Public Scoping Meeting**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the County will hold a **virtual scoping meeting** to provide an opportunity for agency staff and interested members of the public to submit comments, either written or verbal, on the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held on **Wednesday, December 16, 2020 from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.** The scoping meeting will begin with a presentation followed by a question and answer session, and an open public comment period.



Instructions on how to join the virtual scoping meeting will be posted at least one week in advance on the project website:

<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/PRMD/Planning/Stage-Gulch-Organics-Compost-Facility/>

The scoping presentation will be available to view on the website after December 17, 2020.

For questions regarding this notice, please contact Crystal Acker at [crystal.acker@sonoma-county.org](mailto:crystal.acker@sonoma-county.org) or (707) 565-8357 (leave message for call back).

## **Project Background**

Sonoma County does not currently have an operating commercial composting facility (Sonoma Compost Company was shut down in October 2015). The Project Proponent contends the project would provide a countywide solution to handle organics consistent with the County's goal of bringing commercial composting back to Sonoma County. The Project Proponent also contends the Project would assist the County in complying with State mandates to divert solid waste from landfill disposal (Assembly Bill 939) and to reduce disposal of organic waste (Senate Bill 1383).

## **Project Location**

The Project site would occupy an approximately 17-acre portion of the 112.22-acre parcel (portion of Assessor's Parcel Number 068-040-015), of the original 384.57-acre Teixeira Ranch at 2535 Stage Gulch Road in unincorporated Sonoma County. The Project site is approximately 2.5 miles east of the City of Petaluma and approximately 3/4 mile west of the intersection of Adobe Road and Stage Gulch Road (State Route 116). The Project site would be accessed from a private road to be constructed off of Stage Gulch Road (approximately 1/2 mile southwest of the intersection of Adobe Road and Stage Gulch Road), which would extend northwest from Stage Gulch Road for approximately 3,300 feet before reaching the Project site. Figure 1 shows the regional location of the Project and Figure 2 shows the vicinity map.

## **Proposed Project**

The Project includes the construction and operation of a composting facility with an advanced, circular-turned aerated pile (cTAP) composting system. The Project has been designed to process 185,000 tons of organic materials per year. The Project would produce high quality, certified organic compost that meets all applicable quality standards including registration with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Organic Input Material (OIM) program and compliance with requirements outlined in the California Code of Regulations Title 14, Division 7, Chapter 3.1, Article 7, Section 17868.

The Project would include a 557 ft x 557 ft concrete aerated pad for composting operations and minor structures including a small office, operations control container, employee breakroom and bathroom, an entrance/exit scale, and parking. The Project would also include composting system facilities within the concrete aerated pad such as a stockpile and storage area, biofilters, and leachate and stormwater storage containment structures. The Project also proposes to construct a Class A well with a 50-foot concrete seal, an 800-gallon septic tank and pump, and two sets of hydrants and standpipes (one for reclaimed City of Petaluma water and one for on-site reservoir water).



**Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department**  
2550 Ventura Avenue Santa Rosa CA 95403-2859 (707) 565-1900  
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The Project Proponent contends that the cTAP composting system designed by Green Mountain Technologies (GMT) is designed as a cost-effective system for controlling potential environmental impacts including stormwater contamination and odors while maintaining optimal pile conditions during composting. The pile configuration would be in a circle divided into four quarters, which are individually self-contained. The Project's cTAP system would combine efficient turning with watering systems and biofilters, supported by a computerized reversing aeration control technology to optimize composting conditions for all types of feedstocks on the smallest footprint.

As required by the state, the facility would implement a comprehensive Odor Impact Minimization Plan (OIMP) that includes operational controls to minimize the potential for offsite odors. Operational controls would include the following:

- Use of woodchip biofilters and biocovers;
- Processing any particularly odorous materials or loads as soon as possible upon receipt at the Facility;
- Monitoring weather conditions and modifying operations as needed (e.g., cease operations in high winds);
- Careful management of the composting process including maintaining proper carbon to nitrogen levels, maintaining adequate oxygen and moisture levels, and active monitoring of temperature and oxygen conditions; and
- Good housekeeping practices throughout the facility.

Separate from the composting operation, an Agricultural Products Pad is proposed to allow for the development of custom blends, planter mixes, storage of amendments and stabilized compost, and other agricultural products for use in the local agricultural community.

### **Requested Permits and Entitlements**

Permits and approvals from Sonoma County and other agencies would be necessary prior to the development of the Project. The Project would require a Conditional Use Permit, design and site plan review and approval, partial rescission of the Williamson Act Contract on the 384.57-acre property, and other approvals/permits such as grading and erosion control permits, building permits, and road improvement approvals. The Project would also require a Full Solid Waste Facility Permit for a Compostable Materials Handling Facility from the Sonoma County Department of Environmental Health (the Local Enforcement Agency) with concurrence from the Department of Resources Recycling & Recovery (CalRecycle).

Additional subsequent approvals and permits required from other agencies include an Authority to Construct and Permit to Operate (ATC/PTO) from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Waste Discharge Requirements from the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (SFRWQCB), and an encroachment permit for road improvements from the California Department of Transportation.

The project would result in fill of jurisdictional wetlands and/or other waters of the U.S. or state (estimated to be less than 0.5 acres), requiring the project applicant to provide the necessary permit



application/notification materials to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit, to the SFRWQCB for Clean Water Act Section 401 water quality certification, and to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for a Section 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement, as applicable.

### **Project Alternatives**

The EIR will evaluate a reasonable range of project alternatives, including the required No Project Alternative. One alternative would include a reduced-footprint configuration that could be approved without removal of the Project from its Williamson Act contract.

### **Potential Environmental Effect Areas**

The EIR will describe the reasonably foreseeable and potentially significant adverse effects of the Project (both direct and indirect). The EIR also will evaluate the cumulative impacts of the project when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The County anticipates that the proposed project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts in the following topic areas, which will be further evaluated in the EIR.

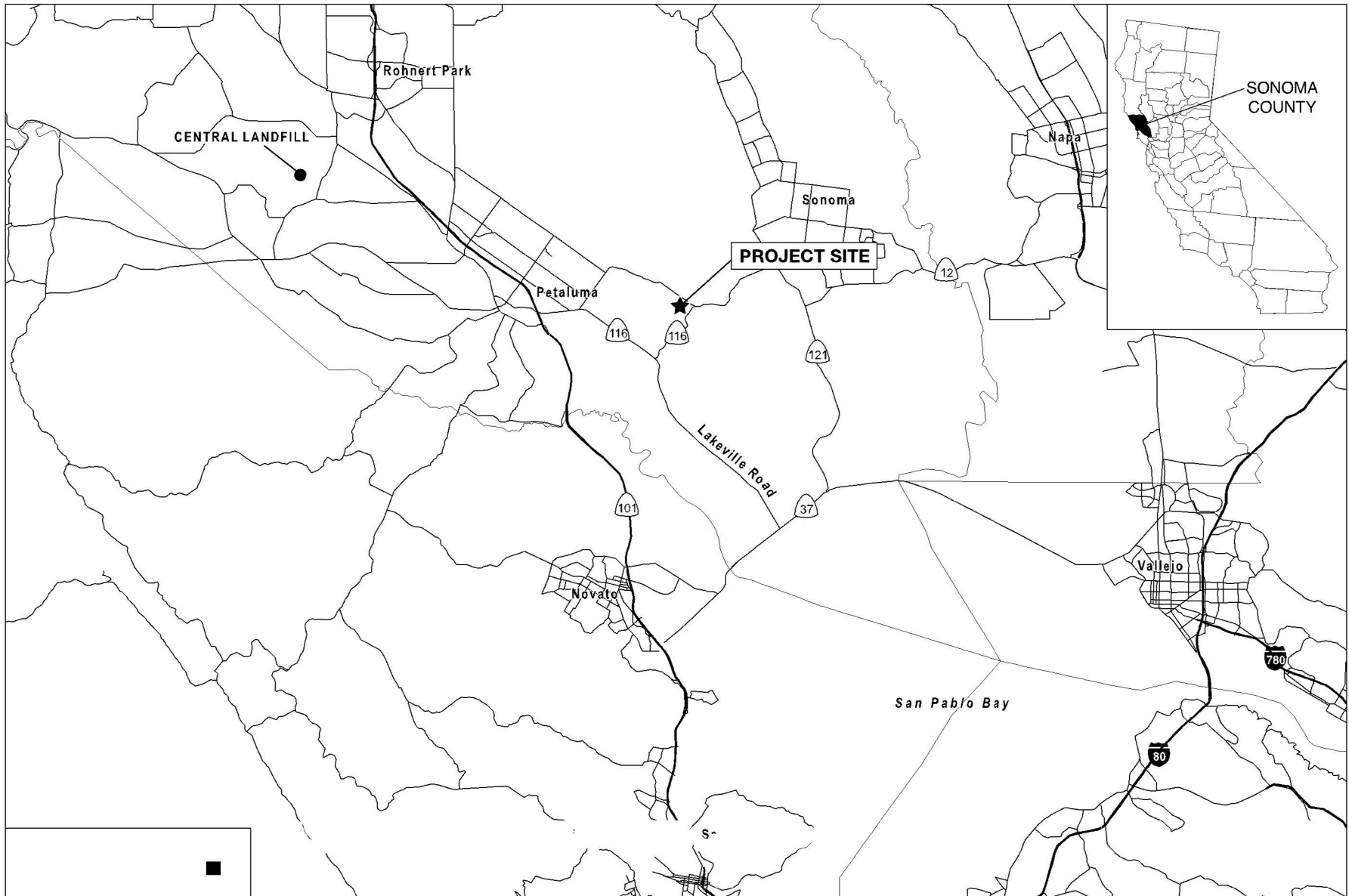
- Aesthetics/Visual
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire
- Cumulative Effects

As environmental documentation for this project is completed, it will be available for review at the County's PRMD offices located at 2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, and online at:

<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/PRMD/Planning/Stage-Gulch-Organics-Compost-Facility/>

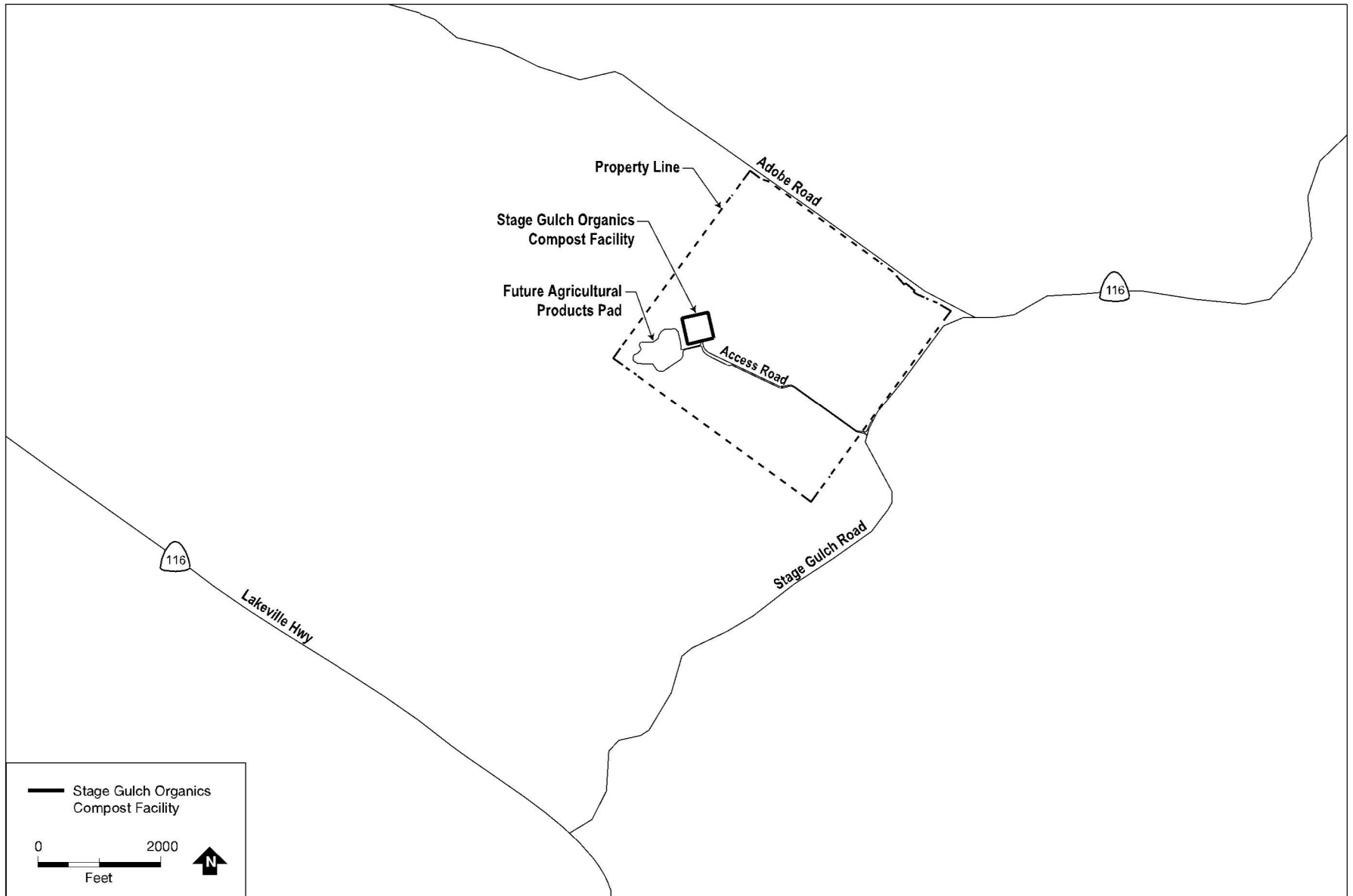
***Note that as long as Shelter in Place is in effect and the Permit Sonoma offices remain closed, documents will only be available online, or through other arrangement with the project planner.***





Source: RCH Group

**Figure 1**  
Regional Map



Source: RCH Group

**Figure 2**  
Project Area Map