

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: State Clearinghouse
PO Box 3044/ 1400 Tenth St
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: County of Tulare – RMA
5961 S Mooney Blvd
Visalia CA 93277

Date: June 13, 2023

Subject: Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Focused Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Scoping Meeting

Project Title: Visalia Disposal (Landfill) Site Compost and Biomass Conversion Facility - Landfilling Operations

Project Applicant: County of Tulare

Project Location: Physical Address: 8614 Avenue 328, Visalia, CA 93291;
Assessor Parcel Number (APN): 077-020-018, -021, 024-, -026, and -030
Section/Township/Range: Sec. 4, 5, T. 18 S., R. 24 E, MDB&M
Latitude/Longitude: 36° 23' 10.64" N, 119° 22' 13" W


Tulare County Resource Management Agency (RMA) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare a Focused Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (Subsequent EIR, SEIR or EIR) for the project identified below. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit(s) or other approval(s) for the project. In addition, please provide us with contact information of the person(s) in your agency that we may contact during the CEQA process.

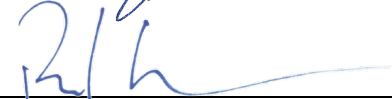
The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. The NOP is also available on the County website at: <https://tularecounty.ca.gov/rma/planning-building/environmental-planning/environmental-impact-reports/visalia-landfill-compost-and-biomass-conversion-facility/>

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

A scoping meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, June 29, 2023, at 1:30 P.M.** in the Main Conference Room of the Tulare County Resource Management Agency at the address shown above. **Please sign in at the Security Desk in the Government Plaza main lobby.** The meeting is also available via call-in by phone at **(559) 624-7116**.

Please direct your response to **Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner** at the address shown above. He may be contacted by e-mail at hguerra@tularecounty.ca.gov or by telephone at 559-624-7121.

Signature:  _____ Date: 6/13/23
Name/Title: Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner

Signature:  _____ Date: 6/13/23
Name/Title: Reed Schenke, P.E., RMA Director / Environmental Assessment Officer

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This Draft Focused Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (Subsequent EIR, SEIR, or EIR) is tiering off of the adopted/certified EIR (SCH No. 2021020054) for the Visalia Disposal (Landfill) Site – Compost and Biomass Conversion Facility (“Original EIR”) project. The SEIR will address two proposed updates to the County’s current landfill permit from the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) to avoid the County’s risk of violating its current permit by exceeding its daily tonnage limit. In summary, the County is proposing to: 1) retain its maximum daily tonnage of refuse of 2,000 tons per day (TPD); and 2) increase the maximum daily vehicle limit from 900 to 1,200 vehicles (an increase of 300 vehicles per day).

As noted in the Original EIR (SCH No. 2000051098), “The RMA intends to develop and operate a covered aerated static pile (CASP) compost facility to comply with the upcoming SB 1383 regulations. The compost facility will be located on the County’s Visalia Landfill property that encompasses approximately 634 acres, of which the compost facility will occupy 36 acres, located in a soil borrow recessed approximately 20 feet below grade. The compost facility will be designed to accept up to 200,000 tons per year (TPY) in increments of 50,000 TPY technology modules and can store up to 200,000 cubic yards on-site of organic material that would have otherwise been landfilled. The compost facility would include installing processing and composting equipment, a 50,000 square foot processing building, compacted compost pads, and a lined pond.”¹ To accommodate the transport of organic material for the compost and biogas component at the Landfill, it is anticipated that a maximum of 300 vehicles (haul trucks) would be required. Increases in haul trucks would be incremental over an approximately 13-year period when the compost and biogas component reaches maximum operations.

To reiterate and summarize, the proposed SEIR is intended to maintain the current maximum permitted volume of solid waste (2,000 TPD) and increase total daily vehicles by 300 vehicles (to haul in organic material) for the compost/biogas component of the Landfill.

It is noted that the Original adopted/certified EIR (Original EIR, SCH No. 2000051098), including applicable technical studies (e.g., air quality and greenhouse gases) and the mitigation monitoring and reporting program (MMRP), are incorporated by reference in their entirety for this SEIR. Also, the findings/conclusions/determinations regarding biological resources contained in the adopted/certified EIR (SCH No. 2000051098) for the Visalia Landfill Master Development Plan will be incorporated by reference in their entirety as applicable to the SEIR.

The site is currently zoned as AE-40 (Exclusive Agriculture 40-Acre Minimum).

See Figures 1 and 2 illustrating the facility’s location and areas (cells) dedicated to landfilling.

Figures included in this Notice

- Figure 1 - Regional Location Map
- Figure 2 – Vicinity Map
- Figure 3 - Site Map

¹ County of Tulare. Draft Focused Environmental Impact Report (SCH# 2021020054) Visalia Disposal Site and Compost Facility. Pages 2-2 and 2-3. Adopted and Certified by the Tulare County Board of Supervisors on September 27, 2022, via Resolution No. 2022-0840.

Potential Approvals Required

The following agencies may have jurisdiction/interests concerning the proposed Project:

California Department of Resources and Recycling and Recovery (Cal Recycle)
County of Tulare Health and Human Services Agency
County of Tulare Resource Management Agencies (Fire, Flood, Public Works)
Regional Water Quality Control Board
San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District

The following interested persons/parties are also included in this notification:

Evan Edgar: evan@edgarinc.org

If you require additional information related to this notice, please contact:

Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner at:
E-mail: hguerra@tularecounty.ca.gov; or
Phone: (559) 624-7121

Figure 1 - Regional and Vicinity Location Map

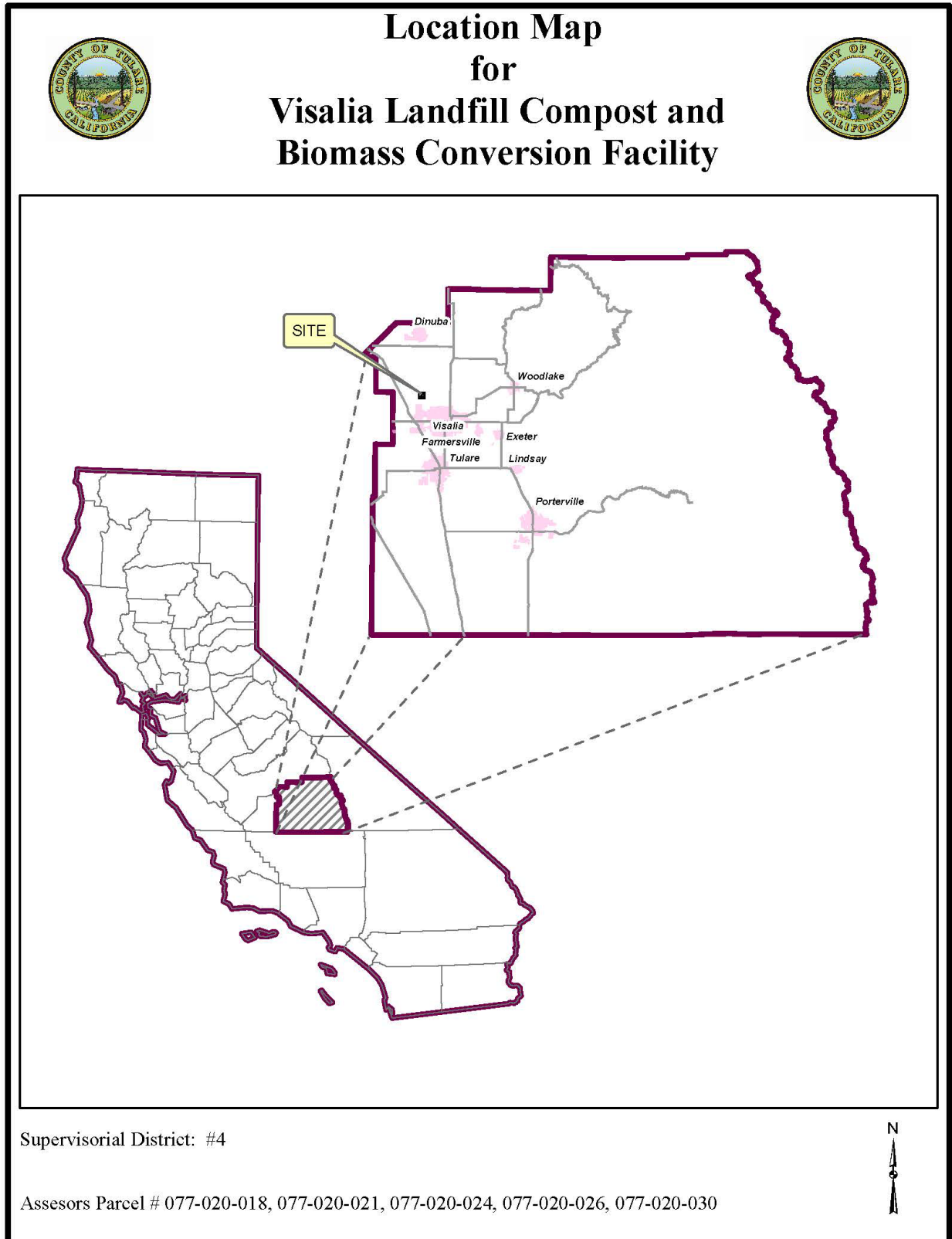





Figure 2 - Vicinity Map

 Composting Area
  Biomass Area
  Landfilling Area

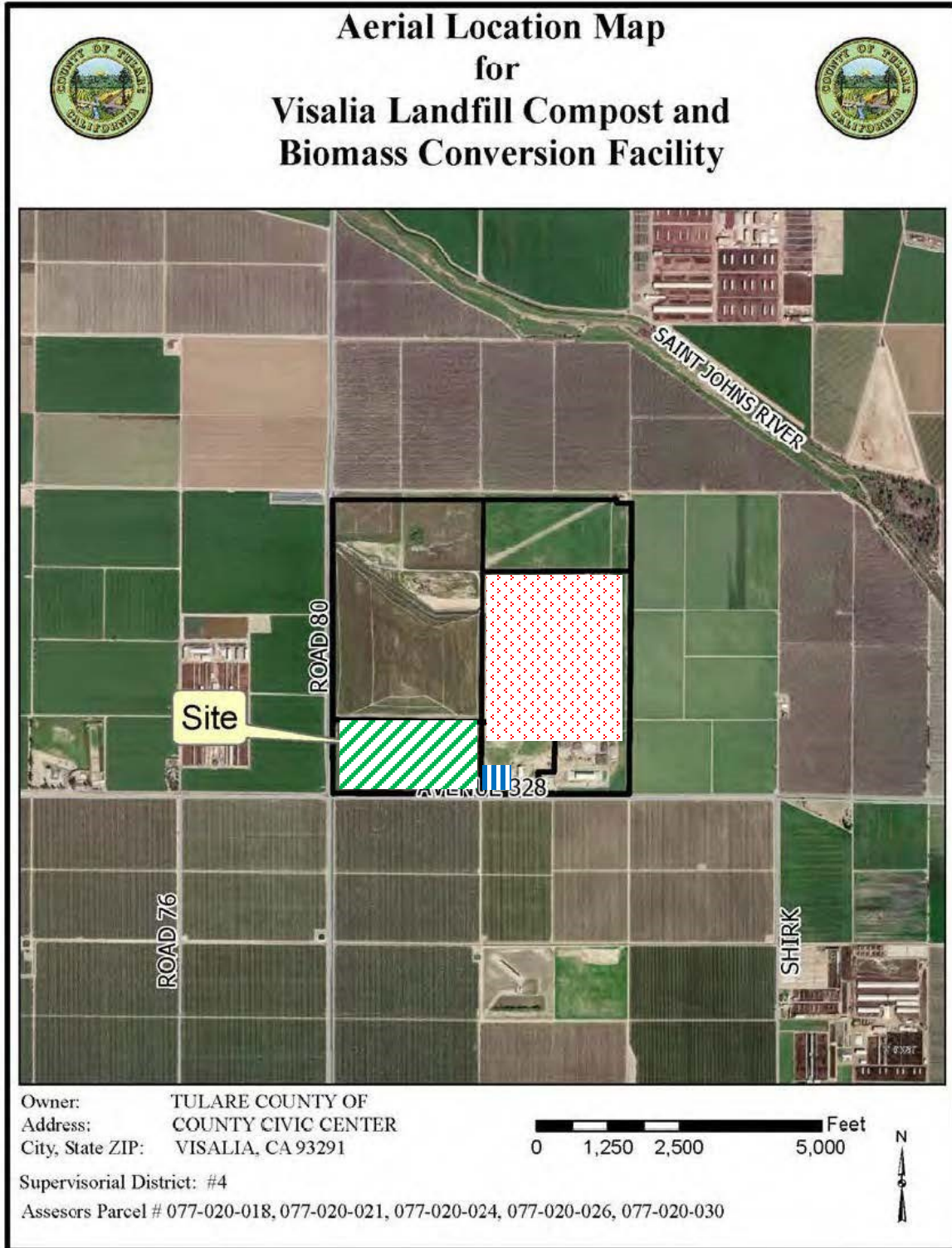
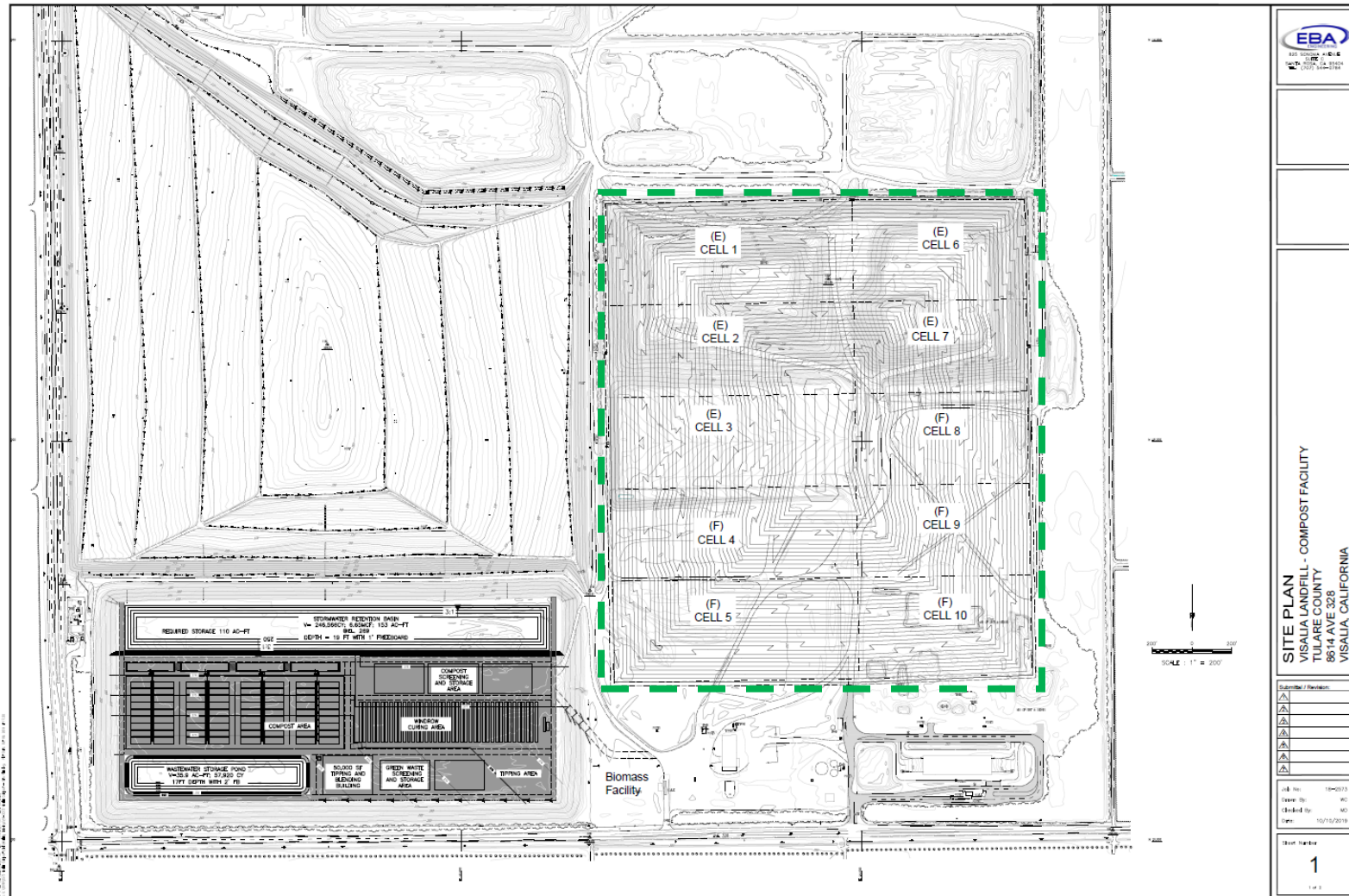


Figure 3 – Entire Visalia Landfill Site Plan
 — — = Area of Landfilling Operations



PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

As noted earlier, the proposed Project will be located on the existing Visalia Landfill site on an approximately 202-acre portion of the site located at the northeast corner of Avenue 328 and Road 80, approximately one mile north of the City of Visalia. The Visalia Disposal (Landfill) Site (634 acres) is located entirely within an unincorporated area of Tulare County. The area of landfilling activities is located on APN: 077-020-026 with a physical address of 8614 Avenue 328, Visalia, California.

The proposed Project is located within the Visalia Urban Area Boundary. Both State Routes 99 and 198 are proximate to the site thereby providing regional access to the proposed Project site. Access to Route 198 is located approximately two linear miles south of the site; while access to SR 99 is located approximately four linear miles west of the site.

The site is relatively flat with minimal slope and is currently used as the Visalia Landfill. The site is zoned as AE-40 (Exclusive Agriculture-40 Acre minimum) and is will remain as such. No expansion of the existing footprint or of the existing cells where solid waste will be landfilled will occur. The site is surrounded by intensive agricultural operations. A walnut orchard located north of the landfill property was recently (May 2023) removed, while row crops are immediately to the east and south. A dairy is located immediately to the west.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The Subsequent EIR will evaluate the probable direct and cumulative environmental impacts associated with continuation of the maximum permitted limit of 2,000 TPD of material landfilled within the Visalia Landfill and operation of the Project. Mitigation measures will be recommended, where feasible, to mitigate potentially significant impacts. The proposed Project will be evaluated on its own merits, resource specific facts, and determinations; therefore, a project specific environmental document will be prepared. The following resources will not be impacted by the proposed Project and will not be discussed in the Focused Subsequent EIR: Aesthetics, Agriculture and Forestry Resources, Geology & Soils, Hydrology/Water Quality, Land Use/Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population/Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Utilities/Service Systems, and Wildfire.

The following resources are proposed for analysis in the Focused SEIR:

Air Quality

The EIR will describe regional and local air quality in the vicinity of the proposed Project site and evaluate impacts to air quality associated with continuation of the 2,000 TPD dedicated to landfilling and the additional 300 vehicle (haul truck) trips for the transport of organic waste to the compost and biogas facilities operations. It is anticipated that an air quality analysis will be prepared to establish baseline, project, and cumulative impacts. The proposed Project's estimated air emissions will be compared to emissions thresholds of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD). The EIR will describe existing air quality conditions within the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin and will evaluate the proposed Project's potential air quality impacts. Potential air quality emissions impacts include odor, dust, pathogens, and

construction related activities; however, the Project will be required to comply with applicable rules, regulations, permits, health risk assessment, etc. It is noted that the Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases Technical Report contained in Appendix “A” of the original Focused EIR (SCH No. 2021020054) will remain applicable in regards to the air quality and greenhouses gases emissions as a result of the Compost and Biogas facilities/component.

Biological Resources

Although unlikely, continued use of landfilling areas may modify biotic habitats used by sensitive plant and wildlife species. As such, site development may be regulated by state or federal agencies, subject to provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and/or covered by policies and ordinances of Tulare County. A biological report will be prepared to address issues related to: 1) sensitive biotic resources occurring on the project site; 2) the federal, state, and local laws regulating such resources; and 3) mitigation measures that may be required to reduce the magnitude of anticipated impacts and/or comply with permit requirements of state and federal resource agencies. The proposed Project’s potential to affect biological resources will be analyzed in the EIR. It is noted that the Biological Technical Memorandum in Appendix “B” of the original Focused EIR (SCH No. 2021020054) will remain applicable in regard to biological resources for the Compost and Biogas facilities/component. Further, the conclusion contained in Chapter 3.2 Biological Resources discussion in the Original EIR (SCH No. 2021020054) in regard to the Compost and Biogas facilities/component and will be incorporated by reference in their entirety as applicable to the SEIR. Also, the findings/conclusions/determinations regarding biological resources contained in the adopted/certified EIR (SCH No. 2000051098) for the Visalia Landfill Master Development Plan will be incorporated by reference in their entirety as applicable to the SEIR.

Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources

There are no visibly identifiable or recognizable cultural or tribal cultural resources within the proposed Project expansion areas. Native American tribes will be consulted consistent with AB 52; a Sacred Lands File Search will be requested from the California Native American Commission (NACH). As any activities relative to landfilling or the increase in vehicle trips will occur within the Visalia Landfill “footprint”, a cultural resources records search will not be requested of the California Historical Resources Information System/Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (SSJVIC). The information contained in Appendix “C” of the original Focused EIR (SCH No. 2021020054) will remain applicable in regard to cultural and tribal cultural resources as a result of the Compost and Biogas facilities/component and will be incorporated by reference in their entirety as applicable to the SEIR. Also, the findings/conclusions/determinations regarding cultural resources contained in the adopted/certified EIR (SCH No. 2000051098) for the Visalia Landfill Master Development Plan will be incorporated by reference in their entirety as applicable to the SEIR. The SEIR will include an analysis of the proposed Project’s potential to affect cultural and tribal cultural resources.

Energy

It is not anticipated that energy usage (e.g., gas, gasoline/diesel fuels) will substantially increase. The SEIR will evaluate impacts to the energy resource associated with continuation of the 2,000

TPD dedicated to landfilling activities and the additional 300 vehicle (haul truck) trips for the transport of organic waste to the compost and biogas facilities operations. The information contained in the original Focused EIR (SCH No. 2021020054) will remain applicable in regard to the energy resource as a result of the Compost and Biogas facilities/component and will be incorporated by reference in their entirety as applicable to the SEIR. The SEIR will include an analysis of the energy resource.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The SEIR will include a discussion of greenhouse gas emissions and the proposed Project's contribution to potential cumulative impacts on global climate. The proposed Project's estimated greenhouse gas emissions will be evaluated for consistency with the Tulare County 2030 General Plan, the Tulare County Climate Action Plan, and the State's 2017 Scoping Plan. The EIR will include a discussion of greenhouse gas emissions and the proposed Project's contribution to potential cumulative impacts on global climate. It is noted that the Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases Technical Report contained in Appendix "A" of the original Focused EIR (SCH No. 2021020054) will remain applicable in regard to greenhouse gases as a result of the Compost and Biogas facilities/component and will be incorporated by reference in their entirety as applicable to the SEIR. To reiterate, the Project is the continuation of the 2,000 TPD dedicated to landfilling activities and the additional 300 vehicle (haul truck) trips for the transport of organic waste to the compost and biogas facilities operations.

Hydrology/Water Quality

FEMA FIRM maps indicate that the proposed Project area site is located in Flood Zone B (the 500-year flood boundary) and outside the 100-year flood hazards area. and is also located outside of a Dam Failure Inundation Area. Water is supplied through existing on-site wells for use in landfill operations (e.g., dust control), the future composting operations, a minor amount for the office facility. The EIR will describe the proposed Project's effect, both directly and cumulatively on the hydrology, water quality, and water supply resources. The EIR will analyze the proposed Project's effect on the hydrology, water quality, and water supply resources.

Transportation

The SEIR will evaluate the Project's impact on regional and local transportation facilities based on a transportation analysis that will assess operational impacts such as employee trips, incoming and outgoing materials heavy-duty truck transport, access, and parking. Construction-related activities will not occur; as such, they will not be evaluated in the SEIR. Site access will be provided via one main driveway connecting to the north side of Avenue 328. It is proposed that 300 additional vehicle (haul trucks) be included to the traffic permit limits stated in the Solid Waste Facility Permit for the entire site (that is, the Visalia Landfill). As noted earlier, the Project proposes continuation of the 2,000 TPD dedicated to landfilling and the additional 300 vehicle (haul truck) trips for the transport of organic waste to the compost and biogas facilities operations will be evaluated. The information contained in the original Focused EIR (SCH No. 2021020054) will remain applicable in regard to the transportation resource as a result of the Compost and Biogas facilities/component and will be incorporated by reference in their entirety as applicable to the SEIR. Also, the findings/conclusions/determinations regarding cultural resources contained in the adopted/certified EIR (SCH No. 2000051098) for the Visalia Landfill

Master Development Plan will be incorporated by reference in their entirety as applicable to the SEIR. The SEIR will analyze outgoing vehicle trips delivering finished compost and other potential traffic impacts.

GROWTH INDUCEMENT

The SEIR will evaluate the proposed Project's potential for growth inducement resulting from expansion or extension of infrastructure improvements, as well as new demand for housing, and goods and services. The effect of primary and secondary increases in employment and economic activity will be discussed.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The SEIR will discuss the incremental contribution of the proposed Project to cumulative effects of other past, current, and planned and reasonably foreseeable Projects in the vicinity. The summary of projects method will be used where applicable. Also, to the extent feasible, the Cumulative Impacts section will quantify the degree of severity of any cumulative impact.

ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED IN THE SEIR

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the SEIR will describe a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed Project that are capable of meeting most of the proposed Project's objectives, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed Project. The SEIR will also identify any alternatives that were considered but rejected by the Lead Agency as infeasible and briefly explain the reasons why. The SEIR will also provide an analysis of the No Project Alternative.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Interested individuals, groups, and agencies may provide to the County of Tulare Resource Management Agency, Planning Branch, written comments on topics to be addressed in the EIR for the proposed Project. Because of time limits mandated by state law, comments should be provided no later than **5:00 p.m. July 14, 2023**. Agencies that will need to use the EIR when considering permits or other approvals for the proposed Project should provide the name of a staff contact person. Please send all comments to:

Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner
Environmental Planning Division
Economic Development and Planning Branch
Tulare County Resource Management Agency
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Visalia, CA 93277-9394
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