

Notice of Preparation

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the John Smith Road Landfill Expansion

Lead Agency:

Agency Name: County of San Benito Planning and Land Use Division of the Resources Management Agency
Address: 2301 Technology Parkway
Hollister, CA 95023

The County of San Benito Planning and Land Use Division of the Resources Management Agency will be the lead agency and will prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) for the project identified below, in accordance with the process set forth in an agreement with the applicant. 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 may need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other project approval.

The project description, location and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. This information is also posted on the County's website at:

<https://www.cosb.us/departments/resource-management-agency/planning-and-land-use-division>.

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**. Please send your response to Stan Ketchum, Principal Planner, at the address shown above or at Sketchum@cosb.us. We will need the name of a contact person in your agency.

Pursuant to the public participation goals of CEQA, the County, in its role as lead agency, will hold two public scoping meetings to allow an opportunity for the public and representatives of the public agencies and other organizations to provide input on the scope of the EIR. The meetings will be held as virtual Zoom meetings. The scoping meeting schedule and Zoom meeting instructions are included on the following page.

Project Title: John Smith Road Landfill Expansion

Project Applicant: Waste Solutions Group of San Benito, LLC

Date: February 22, 2021

Signature: SK

Stan Ketchum, Principal Planner

Telephone: (831) 637-5313

Public Scoping Meetings Zoom Instructions

**Topic: Public Scoping Meeting for the John Smith Road Landfill Expansion
Environmental Impact Report**

Time: Mar 10, 2021 02:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/98161618293?pwd=ThYSzIKZjIKWm1wTjdZc0tvR2lUdz09>

Meeting ID: 981 6161 8293

Passcode: 457359

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Dial by your location

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+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 876 9923 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 981 6161 8293

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/abIWPOnelx>

**Topic: Public Scoping Meeting for the John Smith Road Landfill Expansion
Environmental Impact Report**

Time: Mar 11, 2021 06:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/93747153162?pwd=Ynd0WXJGV3ZCcHFkdKfZSFNvRWJyQT09>

Meeting ID: 937 4715 3162

Passcode: 326148

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Meeting ID: 937 4715 3162

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

DATE: February 22, 2021

TO: Agencies and Interested Parties

FROM: San Benito County Planning and Land Use Division

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the John Smith Road Landfill Expansion Project

REVIEW PERIOD: February 22, 2021 to March 23, 2021

The San Benito County Planning and Land Use Division is the lead agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the John Smith Road Landfill Expansion Project (proposed project). The project is being proposed by Waste Solutions of San Benito, LLC and is described in detail below. In compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.), the Planning and Land Use Division is distributing this Notice of Preparation (NOP) to the Office of Planning and Research, each responsible agency, interested parties, and federal agencies involved in approving the project, and to trustee agencies responsible for natural resources affected by the project.

PURPOSE OF THIS NOTICE OF PREPARATION

In accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 15082), the Planning and Land Use Division has prepared this NOP to inform agencies and interested parties that an EIR will be prepared for the proposed project. The purpose of an NOP is to provide sufficient information about the proposed project and its potential environmental impacts to allow agencies and interested parties the opportunity to provide a meaningful response related to the scope and content of the EIR, including mitigation measures that should be considered and alternatives that should be addressed (State CEQA Guidelines 14 CCR Section 15082[b]).

PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed project site is located at the John Smith Road Landfill (JSRL) and on lands directly east, north and west of the JSRL (Figure 1). The JSRL is located at 2650 John Smith Road approximately 2 miles directly east of the eastern boundary of the City of Hollister. The site is located in a hilly rural area east of the Hollister Valley and west of the rural Santa Ana Valley in unincorporated San Benito County. Access to the site is provided from John Smith Road.

The existing 95.16-acre JSRL includes two parcels owned by San Benito County that total 90.05 acres (Assessor Parcel Numbers [APN] 025-190-073 and 025-190-074) and one 5.11-acre parcel owned by the City of Hollister (APN 025-190-072). The two county-owned parcels contain an operating Class III landfill. Class III landfills only accept non-hazardous waste for disposal. The City of Hollister parcel includes a closed Class I waste disposal area covering less than an acre. Class I landfills may accept both hazardous and nonhazardous wastes for disposal. The County also owns 101.3 acres directly south of the JSRL and John Smith Road (APN 025-190-075) (Figure 2).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project includes a 388.05-acre expansion of the existing 95.16-acre JSRL. This expansion would increase the landfill's disposal capacity, expand the total waste footprint, increase the maximum permitted elevation of the final landfill, and increase the maximum permitted daily tonnage accepted at the JSRL.

To accommodate these changes, several operational changes are also being proposed. These include expanding the landfill entrance area to accommodate additional daily vehicle arrivals and reduce vehicle queuing on John Smith Road, expanding areas for recycling and the County's Household Hazardous Waste program, establishing

an area for the future installation of a gas-to-energy facility, and clean closing the current Class I area owned by the City of Hollister and converting it to a disposal area for Class III waste. Additionally, the proposed project would potentially include the use of a portion of the San Benito County property located south of John Smith Road for habitat mitigation purposes. See Figures 2 and 3 for additional explanation of the proposed project.

These proposed project components are described in more detail below.

Landfill Area and Capacity Expansion

The proposed project includes expanding the existing 95.16-acre landfill onto a 388.05-acre parcel surrounding the landfill on the east, north and west, the ownership of which is proposed to be transferred to the County. The proposed expansion would increase the landfill's disposal capacity from approximately 9.35 million cubic yards to 58 million cubic yards. This expansion would increase the waste footprint from 58 acres to 253 acres, with the remaining acreage used for roads, soil stockpiles, stormwater detention basins, and open space/habitat mitigation. In addition to expanding the landfill footprint, the maximum permitted elevation of the final landfill would increase to 949 feet above mean sea level (MSL), a 29-foot increase above the current permitted elevation of 920 feet MSL. The anticipated site life of the project would vary depending on the final waste density and the long-term waste acceptance rate. However, the remaining site life would be expected to range between 50 and 100 years.

Soil from the landfill footprint would be excavated to create individual waste disposal modules and the excavated soil would be used to form perimeter berms, and for daily, intermediate, and final landfill cover. Excavated soil would be stored on the site in stockpiles and the locations of these stockpiles would vary over time depending upon the site's operational needs.

Both permanent and temporary stormwater basins would be constructed and used during the winter for sediment retention and to store stormwater. Stored stormwater would typically be used for dust suppression and for construction purposes. As required by Title 27 CCR, stormwater conveyances and basins would be designed to accommodate a 24-hour, 100-year rainfall event.

As required by State and Federal standards, the existing groundwater, surface-water, landfill-gas monitoring, and leachate collection and recovery systems would be expanded incrementally, based on landfill sequencing and development, into the expansion area.

If habitat preservation or restoration is necessary to offset biological impacts associated with the proposed landfill expansion, a 70-acre area of the 101.3-acre County property located south of John Smith Road is available and may be used for these purposes. If used as habitat mitigation, these lands would include a conservation easement with a management plan that would ensure they are protected in perpetuity.

Increase in Permitted Tonnage Limit

The proposed project would increase the landfill's permitted daily tonnage limit from 1,000 tons per day to 2,300 tons per day for waste to be buried. The tonnage for materials that would not be buried at the site, including recyclables, materials for beneficial re-use, and direct transfer materials, would not be included in this total. On average, these materials add approximately 25% to the total tonnage of materials delivered to the site.

Site Traffic Changes

Refuse delivered by the general public in small loads typically make up the majority of the vehicle trips to the site, especially on weekends. Large commercial loads comprise the largest tonnage but only a fraction of the total loads received. In 2019, 78% of the tonnage received at the landfill was imported in large trucks from areas outside San Benito County. The significant increase in daily tonnage allowed will generate a proportionate increase in the number of long-distance trips by the commercial trucks importing out-of-county waste. Increases in vehicle miles travelled (VMT) and associated air quality and green-house gas (GHG) emissions are expected to occur.

Site records indicate the largest number of trips do not occur on the days when the highest tonnage is received. Over the past four years (2016-2019 calendar years), all the peak traffic days occurred on Saturdays,

predominantly comprised of local public loads. The San Benito Regional Transportation Plan for 2040 (RTP) forecasts a population growth of 32% between 2015 and 2040 for San Benito County. Using the highest peak-traffic-day over the past four years of 499 trips (2017) and the projected growth reflected in the RTP, the projected peak-traffic-day through 2040 would be 659 vehicles per day entering the site on a weekend. This represents an increase of 59 vehicles over the existing Solid Waste Facility Permit's daily limit of 600 vehicles.

Landfill Entrance Expansion

The project proposes to increase the size of the landfill entrance area from approximately 2.7 acres to 7.3 acres and would provide: (1) a larger area for recycling and the County household hazardous waste (HHW) facility, (2) a larger area for employee and visitor parking, (3) an area for a truck wheel wash facility to ensure mud and debris are not tracked onto John Smith Road, (4) an area for equipment maintenance, and (5) an area for a future landfill gas-to-energy facility (once the landfill generates enough landfill gas to support such a facility).

The revised entrance would increase the queuing length¹ during operating hours from the current 800 feet to 820 feet and provide two inbound lanes when needed, thereby almost doubling the queuing capacity. It also provides the geometry to add second entrance and exit scales in the future so that two vehicles can be weighed at the same time, both inbound and outbound, thereby doubling the transaction capacity.

The new entrance area would be constructed by excavating roughly 240,000 cubic yards of weathered bedrock. This soil would be used to construct access roads and a visual berm in the landfill expansion area or stockpiled for future use.

Landfill Gas-to-Energy Facility

Landfill gas is generated through the anaerobic (without oxygen) decay of organic materials buried within landfills. Landfill gas typically contains 50 to 60 percent methane, which is the primary constituent of natural gas. Landfill gas is currently combusted in an on-site landfill-gas flare. The proposed project will ultimately include the installation of a landfill gas-to-energy facility once sufficient landfill gas is being generated at the site to make the facility economically viable. The landfill is projected to be generating sufficient landfill gas to support a landfill gas-to-energy facility within approximately five years. The landfill gas-to-energy facility is proposed to be located northeast of the gatehouse near the landfill entrance area.

Class I Area Clean Closure

The 5.11-acre parcel owned by the City of Hollister that contains a closed Class 1 disposal facility of less than one acre is proposed to be converted to a disposal area for Class III waste. The existing stockpiled soil that is located on this parcel would be used in ongoing landfill operations. After all of the stockpiled soil is used, a clean closure plan would be prepared for approval by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control and the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. The clean closure plan would identify how contaminated materials would be managed. Compliance sampling would be required to confirm clean closure of the Class I site. Once all Class I waste was removed, the area would be converted into a Class III waste disposal module. This would include installing a landfill liner and leachate collection and removal system, similar to other Class III modules at the project site. This component of the project would only be implemented if determined to be cost effective. The City of Hollister owns this parcel and has indicated their willingness for the clean closure, as well as future re-use of the site for the Class III disposal location.

¹ Queuing Length is the distance from the intersection of the entrance road and John Smith Road to the gatehouse and represents the length of entrance roadway on which vehicles can line up to enter the facility without backing up vehicle traffic on John Smith Road.

REQUIRED PERMITS AND APPROVALS

The project would need the following discretionary approvals from the County.

General Plan Amendment

The existing JSRL has a General Plan land use designation of Public/Quasi-Public (PQP) and the 388.05-acre expansion site currently has two land use designations: Rangeland (RG) and Agriculture (A). The proposed project includes a General Plan amendment to change the designation of the expansion site to PQP to be consistent with the existing JSRL and to accommodate the proposed waste disposal activities. The PQP land use designation allows, among other uses, landfills, recycling, and resource recovery facilities.

Conditional Use Permit

The existing JSRL and proposed expansion are within areas zoned Agriculture Production (AP) and Agricultural Rangeland (AR). The San Benito County Code sections §25.07.005 and §25.29.106 establish uses conditionally permitted within AR and AP zoned areas, including Governmental enterprises and/or private enterprise performing governmental functions (federal, state and local). The JSRL qualifies as a private enterprise performing a governmental function. As such, a Conditional Use Permit is required.

Transfer of Ownership to San Benito County

Upon project approval, the applicant will transfer ownership of the project site to the County.

Other Approvals

The project also may require approvals from other local, state, and federal governmental agencies, including the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), California Department of Toxic Substances and Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB).

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The environmental issues to be addressed in the Draft EIR are anticipated to include those listed below. The Draft EIR will also identify detailed mitigation measures intended to minimize significant environmental impacts.

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality and Odors
- Cultural and Tribal Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Paleontology
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Land Use and Planning
- Public Services
- Public Health and Safety
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Other CEQA Sections, including alternatives, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative Impacts
- Agricultural Resources
- Biological Resources
- Energy
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Noise
- Transportation/Traffic
- Wildfire

Aesthetics

The existing John Smith Road Landfill is a prominent visual feature in the nearby area and changes to the landfill and associated solid waste management operations anticipated with project implementation could alter the site's existing visual character.

Agricultural Resources

The expansion of the solid waste operations onto agricultural grazing lands would reduce the acres of land committed to agriculture within the County.

Air Quality and Odors

During project construction, criteria air pollutant emissions would be temporarily and intermittently generated. Operation of the proposed project would result in air pollutant emissions from the solid waste management operations and from vehicle trips generated by the project. Construction- and operations-related emissions could contribute to regional emissions. The expanded landfill operations could also change odor generation that could affect rural residents.

Biological Resources

Special-status plant or wildlife species could potentially occur on the project site. Implementation of the proposed project could result in disturbance or take of special- status species or disturbance or removal of suitable habitat for these species.

Cultural and Tribal Resources

Although no known prehistoric or historic resources have been identified on the project site, excavation activities necessary to construct landfill modules and other solid waste elements have the potential to disturb unknown archaeological or tribal cultural resources. Tribal consultation is required to occur as early as possible in the process.

Energy

The expansion in solid waste operations at the site would increase total energy demand both during project construction and operations. The construction of a landfill gas-to-energy facility could offset some of the energy demands of the landfill operations.

Geology, Soils, and Paleontology

The project site is situated in a seismically active geologic province. Soil disturbance activities associated with individual project elements could increase soil erosion or affect soil stability. The stability of the expanded landfill could be affected by seismic activities or soil instability. Also, excavation activities have the potential to expose unknown paleontological resources.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change

Greenhouse gas emissions are anticipated to be generated during project construction and operations. Emissions would be associated with vehicle trips, on-site equipment usage, increased energy demand, and ongoing and expanded solid waste operations.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

The anticipated construction activities and expanded solid waste operations proposed at the site have the potential to increase the transport, use, and storage of hazardous materials that could represent a risk to the public.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Expansion of the solid waste disposal activities would alter the site's hydrology and could affect the quality of the water discharged from the site.

Land Use and Planning

The proposed project would alter land uses on the property that will be evaluated in the context of the policies included in the San Benito County General Plan and San Benito County Code.

Noise

The expanded construction and solid waste operations at the site would increase noise generation and introduce new noise sources that could affect rural residents.

Public Services

Project implementation could increase the demands on local fire protection, law enforcement, and road maintenance services.

Transportation/Traffic

The expanded construction and solid waste operations at the site would increase vehicle trips on local roadways associated with new passenger vehicle and truck haul trips, which would increase vehicle miles traveled, in particular with the potential increase in importation of out-of-county waste.

Utilities and Service Systems

The expanded construction and solid waste operations at the site would increase the demand on site utilities including water supply and wastewater services, and solid waste disposal.

Wildfires

The expansion of solid waste activities onto the surrounding grasslands could alter wildland fire risks within the area.

Cumulative Impacts

Implementation of the proposed project could potentially result in significant impacts to the above resource areas. When taken together with the effects of past projects, other current projects, and probable future projects, the project's contribution to the overall cumulative effect of all these activities could be considerable.

ALTERNATIVES TO BE EVALUATED IN THE EIR

In accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR Section 15126.6), the EIR will describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project that are capable of meeting most of the project's objectives, and that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. The EIR will also identify any alternatives that were considered but rejected by the lead agency as infeasible and briefly explain the reasons why. The EIR will provide an analysis of the No-Project Alternative and will also identify the environmentally superior alternative.

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

The NOP is available for public review at the following location:

San Benito County Planning and Land Use Division
2301 Technology Parkway
Hollister, CA 95023-9174

The NOP is also available for public review on the Planning and Land Use Division's website:
<https://www.cosb.us/departments/resource-management-agency/planning-and-land-use-division>

COMMENTS ON NOP

Agencies and interested parties may provide the Planning and Land Use Division with written comments on topics to be addressed in the EIR for the project. Because of time limits mandated by State law, comments must be provided at the earliest date possible but no later than 5:00 pm on February 8, 2021. Please direct all written comments to the following address:

San Benito County Planning and Land Use Division
2301 Technology Parkway
Hollister, CA 95023-9174
Attention: Stan Ketchum
Email: SKetchum@cosb.us

Agencies that will need to use the EIR when considering permits or other approvals for the proposed project should provide the name of a contact person. Comments provided by email should include "John Smith Road Landfill Expansion Project NOP" in the subject line and the name and address of the commenter in the email body.

All written comments pertaining to environmental issues received during the NOP comment period will be considered and addressed in the Draft EIR, which is anticipated to be available for public review in late spring 2021.

SCOPING MEETINGS

To assist in local participation, two Public Scoping Meetings will be held to present the proposed project and to solicit input from the public and responsible agencies on the content of the Draft EIR. The scoping meetings will be held virtually to minimize exposure to Covid-19. The Zoom meeting instructions are included on the following page.

Public Scoping Meetings Zoom Instructions

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Environmental Impact Report**

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