

## **Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Hilmar Biogas Cluster Project**

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code 21000-21189) and the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Sections 15000-15387), the Merced County (County) is the Lead Agency for the Hilmar Biogas Cluster Project (proposed project) located at Lander Avenue and August Avenue near the community of Hilmar. Based on the Initial Study prepared for the proposed project, the County has prepared a Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) pursuant to CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15072, the County is distributing this Notice of Intent (NOI) to adopt an MND to agencies that have permit authority over the proposed project, interested groups, and organizations in accordance with CEQA.

Notice is hereby given that a Draft MND for the proposed project is available for public review during the public comment period (July 26, 2021, through August 25, 2021). The County has prepared the Draft MND to analyze environmental impacts associated with implementation of the proposed project and to propose mitigation measures for identified potentially significant impacts that will eliminate or mitigate impacts to less than significant levels.

**Lead Agency:** Merced County

**Project Title:** Hilmar Biogas Cluster Project

**Project Location:** Lander Avenue and August Avenue, Hilmar, California, 95324

The project site is not included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.

**Project Description:** Hilmar Dairy Biogas LLC (Applicant) plans to develop the Hilmar Biogas Cluster Project (Project), which would gather and process biogas from seven digester projects for eight dairies. The Applicant is proposing the Project in the area northwest of the unincorporated Merced County community of Hilmar. The purpose of the Project is to deliver and process biogas (mostly methane and carbon dioxide) for the generation of renewable compressed natural gas (RCNG). The Project involves a new Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to allow these uses. The proposed Plant would include a biogas upgrade Plant, stormwater retention basin, and Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) point-of-receipt (POR) area. In addition, the proposed Project proposes a gathering low-pressure Pipeline that would deliver biogas from a total of seven anaerobic dairy digesters to the Plant. No buildings are proposed, although concrete pads for the biogas upgrade equipment and the PG&E POR interconnection equipment would be constructed.

**MND:** The MND examines the potential impacts generated by the proposed project in relation to the following Environmental Analysis Checklist categories: Aesthetics, Agriculture and Forest 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 purpose of this notice is to inform local residents, institutions, agencies, and other interested parties about the availability of the MND during the public comment period (July 26, 2021, through

August 25, 2021). **Written comments on the draft MND must be submitted no later than Wednesday, August 25, to the address below.**

**Address Comments to:**

Brian Guerrero, County Planner

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**MND Reviewing Locations**

**Online**

<https://www.co.merced.ca.us/414/Environmental-Documents>

**Merced County**

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