



County of Fresno

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING
STEVEN E. WHITE, DIRECTOR

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- APPLICANT: Westside Farmers Cooperative Gins, Inc.
- APPLICATION NOS.: Initial Study No. 8133 and Classified Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3720
- DESCRIPTION: Allow the development and operation of an almond hulling/shelling facility within existing buildings previously used as part of a cotton gin operation, on a 21.41-acre parcel, along with an adjacent 43.83-acre and 94.40-acre parcel for temporary product storage, in the AE-20 (Exclusive Agricultural, 20-acre minimum parcel size) Zone District
- LOCATION: The project site is located on the south side of W. Clayton Avenue 1,000 feet west of S. Tuolumne Avenue, and approximately 2.30 miles west-southwest of the unincorporated community of Tranquillity (APNs 028-041-16S, 028-041-62S, 028-081-53S) (28285 W. Clayton Avenue) (Sup. Dist. 1).

I. AESTHETICS

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:

- A. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista; or
- B. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project proposes to use existing buildings, no new construction is proposed that would affect viewsheds from surrounding property. No scenic vistas or other scenic resources were identified in the analysis. The project site is not located in the vicinity of a designated State scenic highway.

- C. In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are

experienced from publicly accessible vantage points.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

There are no identifiable, publicly accessible viewpoints. The visual character of the area will be unchanged by the proposed project, as the project entails the use of existing buildings and structures associated with the former cotton ginning operation.

- D. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

The project does include the installation of new outdoor lighting on all sides of the main office building and on the huller building; the new lighting is not anticipated to have an adverse effect on adjacent property; however, the following Mitigation Measure has been included to reduce any impacts from new or existing outdoor lighting to a less than significant level.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *All outdoor lighting shall be hooded and directed away from adjacent properties and public streets.*

II. AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:

- A. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Of the three parcels associated with this project, the 21.41-acre parcel, APN No. 028-041-16S is improved with several buildings and structures which were formerly used as part of a cotton ginning operation, and which will be converted to use as an almond

hulling and processing facility. The property contains land designated as Urban and Built-Up, according to the 2016 Fresno County Important Farmlands Map. Urban and Built-Up Land is defined as being occupied by structures with a building density of at least one unit to 1.5 acres, or 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. In this case APN 028-041-16S The other two parcels contain agricultural land designated as predominately Vacant, Disturbed land, or Grazing land. There is no land contained by any of the three subject parcels which is designated as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance or Unique Farmland contained within the subject parcels, thus no land so designated will be converted because of the project.

B. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act Contract?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Two the three parcels associated with the project, APN 028-041-62S (43.83-acres), and 028-081-53S (94.40) which may also be used for almond hulling/shelling product storage are both enrolled in the Williamson Act Program under Contract No. 2597 and Contract No. 169 respectively . As the two parcels do not contain an active agricultural operation, they no longer qualify to remain in contract and were required to record Notices of Non-Renewal of their respective contracts. Those notices were recorded on December 3, 2021. As no development is proposed for these two parcels of land, and in consideration of the Williamson Act contracts being non-renewed, there will not be conflicts with the Williamson Act. The land will remain available for agricultural operations. There are no changes proposed to the zoning or land use designation of the parcels.

C. Conflict with existing zoning for forest land, timberland or timberland zoned Timberland Production?

D. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The land associated with the project does not contain forest land, timberland or land zoned for Timberland Production, nor will it result in the loss or conversion of forest land.

E. Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forestland to non-forest use?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The subject parcels do not contain any Farmland of the classification listed under subsection A above, or forestland. Therefore, the project will not result in the conversion of either Farmland or forestland.

III. AIR QUALITY

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:

- A. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable Air Quality Plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project was reviewed by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The Air District did not express any concerns that the project would result in adverse impacts to air quality. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) adopted a Scoping Plan, most recently updated in December 2017, to achieve the greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals set by California Assembly Bill (AB 32) and Senate Bill (SB 32). Based on the results of An Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Analysis (Air Quality Analysis) prepared for the project by Trinity Consultants, dated June 23, 2021, the project will not conflict or obstruct implementation of any applicable air quality plan.

- B. Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's, Guidance for Assessing and Mitigating Air Quality Impacts (GAMAQI), dated March 19, 2015; Criteria pollutants as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are reactive organic gases (ROG), ozone, particulate matter (PM), carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, and lead. These criteria pollutants are regulated by the EPA guidelines which set permissible levels. According to the conclusions of the Air Quality Analysis by Trinity Consultants, neither short term project construction nor project operation would result in exceedance of any Air District established thresholds of significance for Criterial Pollutants.

- C. Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations; or
- D. Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

According to publicly available internet based aerial imagery, there are approximately eight (8) residential dwellings within three-quarter miles of the project site, three of which are located within 750 feet of the project site, and one of those is a caretakers residence located approximately 375 feet ,on one of the subject parcels 028-041-62S, westerly adjacent to where the proposed hulling and shelling operations will take place.

Sensitive receptors are defined by in the GAMAQI as people that have an increased sensitivity to air pollution or environmental contaminants. Residential dwellings, along with schools, parks and playgrounds, day care centers, nursing homes. Hospitals, and other similar facilities are considered potential sensitive receptor locations. Because the project is located in an area of generally sparse residential development and large farming operations, consisting of vineyards, field crops and confined animal feedlot operations, where airborne fugitive dust, and application of agricultural chemicals are anticipated to occur regularly. However, according to the applicant's submitted operational statement the majority of the proposed operation will take place indoors therefore airborne dust generated by that part of the project would be minimal, fugitive dust will mostly be limited to that which is generated by truck traffic to and from the site and from the use of vehicles and non-road equipment on the site. General Plan Policy OS-G.14 requires that all access roads, driveways, and parking areas serving new commercial and industrial development to be constructed with materials that minimize particulate emissions and are appropriate to the scale and intensity of the use. The project site in this case is comprised of several buildings which were part of a former cotton ginning operation, and most of the area surrounding the buildings is concrete paved including the driveway on to Clayton Avenue.

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- A. Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

A portion of the 21.41-acre parcel was formerly operated as a cotton gin, and is predominately surrounded by agricultural land. According to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) there were recorded occurrences of the burrowing owl in 2006 approximately three-quarter miles southwest of the project site, and occurrences of the state threatened Swainson's hawk approximately 3.5 miles northeast of the project site in 2011. The burrowing owl is protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). The project site itself is within the range and predicted habitat area of the Burrowing Owl with a high habitat suitability rating based on the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) information system and predictive model for California's Wildlife. The project site is also within the range and predicted habitat area of the state threatened Swainson's Hawk, with a medium to high habitat suitability rating. Since the project does not propose any extensive ground disturbance or construction of any new buildings, only the interior remodel of a portion of an existing building to be converted to office use, and the potential storage of agricultural product separated during the hulling/shelling operation, the project is unlikely to result in adverse effects to any identified candidate, sensitive or special status species due to habitat modification.

- B. Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

A search of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Natural Diversity Database, BIOS mapping application indicated that the project site is within the predicted habitat area of the mountain plover, and the burrowing owl, both of which are designated and species of special concern and are also protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Additionally, the CNNDDDB indicated that there have been recorded occurrences of both the mountain plover and burrowing owl within three quarter miles of the project site. However, the project does not propose any ground disturbance which would inadvertently cause impacts to the mountain plover or burrowing owl habitat.

- C. Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No federally protected wetlands were identified in the analysis. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) there may be an intermittent stream running through the project site, however no wetland features were identified by the NWI mapper, on any of the three subject parcels.

- D. Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose the construction of any new buildings or other structures that would physically interfere with the movement of any native wildlife species. No established wildlife corridors or nursery sites were identified in the vicinity of the project site.

- E. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance; or
- F. Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state Habitat Conservation Plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No adopted habitat conservation plans, or natural community conservation plans applicable to the area of the project were identified in the analysis.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- A. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5; or
- B. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5; or
- C. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

This proposal was routed to the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (SSJVIC) for a historical and archaeological records search. The SSJVIC noted that there were no available records indicating that the project area had been surveyed by a qualified cultural resources consultant, and that given the known archaeological sensitivity of the region, prehistoric or historic cultural resources may be present within the project site; and, that current site conditions would appear to allow for adequate survey of potential surface or sub-surface cultural resources. No recommendation was made for an archaeological survey to be undertaken, only that the age of the existing cotton gin structures be evaluated by an architectural historian to determine historical significance if any. Because the project does not propose any new ground disturbance or construction of new buildings, no additional historical or archaeological studies were required. However, to address the possibility of the discovery of previously unknown surface or subsurface cultural/historical resources, the following Mitigation Measure has been included.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *In the event that cultural resources are unearthed during ground-disturbing activities, all work shall be halted in the area of the find. An Archeologist shall be called to evaluate the findings and make any necessary mitigation recommendations. If human remains are unearthed during ground disturbing activities, no further disturbance is to occur until the Fresno County Sheriff-Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and disposition. All normal evidence procedures shall be followed by photos, reports, video, and etc. If such remains are determined to be Native American, the Sheriff-Coroner must notify the Native American Commission within 24 hours.*

VI. ENERGY

Would the project:

- A. Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation; or

- B. Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Construction and operation of the proposed project will commit nonrenewable resources in the form of fossil fuels, including liquified petroleum (LP) gas and single use plastics, also oil based, in the form of polyethylene plastic sheeting needed for covering field run product, and to act as a sealant barrier during fumigation, as part of the operation. The project will use approximately two-million square feet of 6-millimeter polyethylene sheeting. The proposed operation is anticipated to generate a relatively low number of new traffic trips during the approximately five month long almond processing season, including truck trips, and during construction of the office. The consumption of diesel fuel and gasoline is not anticipated to be wasteful, inefficient or unnecessary. According to the applicant's submitted operational statement, the polyethylene plastic sheeting will be recycled after use.

VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Would the project:

- A. Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:
1. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault?
 2. Strong seismic ground shaking?
 3. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?
 4. Landslides?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

According to Figure 9-5 (Probabilistic Seismic Hazards (10% probability in 50 years) of the Fresno County General Plan Background Report (FCGPBR) is in an area of the County designated as having a 20-40 percent peak horizontal ground acceleration (PGA) uniform soft-rock site condition, given a 10 percent probability in 50 years of strong seismic activity. All buildings and structures proposed for use with the project are existing and must meet all applicable requirements of the current California building standards code which include seismic design requirements based on particular seismic zones, as identified on Figure 9-4 (California Building Code Seismic Zones) FCGPBR. The project site is located in seismic zone 3 Uniform Building Code. According to Chapter 9 of the FCGPBR, liquefaction can occur during seismic activity when ground acceleration approaches 0.3g or 30 percent of the force of gravity, in sandy soil with relative densities typical of the San Joaquin alluvial deposits. Liquefaction occurs when soil is temporarily transformed to a fluid form during intense and prolonged ground

shaking. Areas most prone to liquefaction are those which are water saturated, where the water table is less than 30 feet below ground, and where the soil is sandy with low to medium density. Most of Fresno County is in an area of relatively low seismic activity, certain fault systems near the eastern and western boundaries of the County have the potential to produce high magnitude earthquakes in other parts of the County, which could cause moderate intensity ground shaking, especially in valley areas.

- B. Result in substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil; or
- C. Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not in area identified as being at increased risk of erosion, according to Figure 7-4 (Erosion Hazards in Western Fresno County) of the FCGPBR. According to Figure 9-6 (Landslide Hazards and Areas of Subsidence) of the FCGPBR, the project site is not in an area identified as being at increased risk from landslide, however it is in an area of deep subsidence. Subsidence occurs when a large portion of land is displaced vertically, usually due to the withdrawal of groundwater, oil or natural gas. Although subsidence can affect large areas, especially when caused by groundwater withdrawal, certain areas of Fresno County have experienced substantial subsidence in the past half century, including in Western Fresno County where the project is located. However, subsidence is not anticipated to occur as a result of the project causing ground instability at the project site.

- D. Be located on expansive soil as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to Figure 7-1 (Expansive Soils) of the FCGPBR, the project site is not in an area identified as having soils exhibiting moderately high to high expansion potential, general shown as being along the eastern side of the Fresno Slough, in Western Fresno County. The project site is located approximately 3.6 miles west southwest of the Fresno Slough.

- E. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will utilize the existing septic system to serve domestic uses for the proposed almond hulling operation.

- F. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No paleontological resources were identified in the analysis. Because there is little to no ground disturbance proposed, no impacts to any previously unknown paleontological resources or unique geologic resources is anticipated.

VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Would the project:

- A. Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment; or
- B. Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The conclusions of the Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Analysis discussed under Section III A. and B, are based in part on information derived from the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) version 2016.3.2, using a default construction equipment list for the proposed project type and development intensity; and on the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's (SJVAPCD) Guidance for Assessing and Mitigating Air Quality Impacts (GAMAQI, 2015). The Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas analysis completed by Trinity Consultants, dated June 23, 2021, concluded that construction related GHG emissions would total approximately 157.67 metric tons of CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) during the anticipated 18-month construction schedule; and operational GHG emissions, mostly from mobile sources, would total approximately 500.37 metric tons of CO₂e per year for the life of the project. The potential impacts of GHG emissions generated by a project were evaluated in terms of whether the addition of project GHG emissions is consistent with the State's GHG reduction goals of achieving 1990 emissions levels by 2020 established by Assembly Bill (AB) 32, and on an individual project level, a 29 percent reduction from baseline GHG emissions, or what would otherwise occur as a result of the project in 2020 given 2005 standards and technology; which goal was further refined to 21.7 percent, established by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) Scoping Plan. Senate Bill (SB32) established GHG reduction goal of 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. The project's GHG emissions were determined to be approximately 29.4 percent below 2005 baseline emissions, therefore impacts from the project on GHG emissions were determined to be less than significant.

IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Would the project:

- A. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?
- B. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose the routine transport, or disposal of hazardous materials, therefore no significant risk to the public would occur due to an accidental release of such materials. The site will have two above ground diesel fuel storage tanks with containment basins, and a propane storage tank to supply diesel powered loading equipment and propane powered forklifts. Other materials such as lubricants will be stored inside. Because the project will store hazardous materials on site, it is subject to compliance with California Health and Safety Code, and the applicant/operator will be required to submit a Hazardous Materials Business Plan to the Fresno County Department of Public Health.

- C. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school. The nearest existing schools to the project site are Tranquillity Elementary and Tranquillity High School located approximately 2.5 miles east northeast.

- D. Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to a review of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), NEPAassist mapping tool, the project site is not located on or in the vicinity of a site, included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTC). A search of the DTC EnviroStor database indicated that there are no hazardous materials sites located within one mile of the project.

- E. For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located with an airport land use plan area or within two miles of a public or private airport.

- F. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site has paved access from a public road, and the project does not propose any alteration of the access such that it would interfere emergency equipment or apparatus access to the site.

- G. Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located in an area of the County at increased risk from wildland fire.

X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Would the project:

- A. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose any waste or wastewater discharge, and is not anticipated to violate any water quality standards, or waste discharge requirements. The project will be subject to all applicable regulatory waste discharge requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

- B. Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The project proposes to consume approximately 350,000 gallons of surface water for domestic use during the operating season August 1 to December 31, or 2,300 gallons per day for the five-month period; and 150,000 gallons or 700 gallons per day during the non-operating season January 1 to July 31, for a total domestic use of 500,000 gallons annually, which will be provided by the Tranquillity Irrigation District. The project was reviewed by the Central Delta-Mendota Groundwater Sustainability Agency, and the Water and Natural Resources Division of the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning, which did not express any concerns about the project resulting in any adverse impacts to groundwater sustainability in the basin. Water use for fugitive dust control is estimated to be approximately 5,000 gallons per day for the operating

season, and 500 gallons per day for the non-operating season, for a total of 735,000 gallons annually. The almond hulling and shelling operation uses no process water.

C. Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

1. Result in substantial erosion or siltation on or off site?
2. Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on or off site?
3. Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or
4. Impede or redirect flood flows?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose a substantial amount of grading or addition of impervious surface, that would alter the existing drainage pattern of the subject parcels, resulting in substantial erosion, increased runoff, or alteration of flood flows.

D. In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The subject parcels are not located within a flood hazard area as identified by FEMA FIRM Panel 2025H, the project is located within Zone X, which is an area of minimal flood hazard. Additionally, the subject parcels are not located in a coastal area where the risk of tsunami and seiche exist. The project is located in a Dam Failure Flood Inundation Area, according to Figure 9-8 (Dam Failure Flood Inundation Areas) of the Fresno County General Plan Background Report (FCGPBR)

E. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project is located within the Central Delta-Mendota Subbasin, and under the jurisdiction of the Central Delta-Mendota Region Multi-Agency Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA). The agency reviewed the proposal and did not express any concerns related to adverse impacts to groundwater sustainability because of the project.

XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING

Would the project:

- A. Physically divide an established community; or
- B. Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project has no features which would physically divide an established community, or conflict with any land use plan.

XII. MINERAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- A. Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state; or
- B. Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local General Plan, Specific Plan or other land use plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project is not located within any of the areas of mineral resources identified by Figures 7-7(Mineral Resource Locations), 7-8 (Principal Mineral Producing Locations 1997-1998), or 7-9 (Generalized Mineral Resource Zone Classifications), of the Fresno County General Plan Background Report (FCGPBR).

XIII. NOISE

Would the project result in:

- A. Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies; or
- B. Generation of excessive ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Project operations, including truck and vehicle traffic, and operation of on-site equipment has the potential to generate an increase in ambient noise levels, and ground borne vibration in the immediate area of the proposed operation. The applicant's submitted operational statement indicates that the almond hulling/shelling operation

produce approximately 85 decibels at 200 feet from the hulling/shelling building based on noise level testing at other sites. The Fresno County Ordinance Code, Chapter 8.40 – Noise Ordinance provides that the daytime noise level as measured from any affected single-family or multi-family residence, school, hospital, church or public library shall not exceed 70 decibels or 65 decibels at night; however, there are no sensitive receptors within 200 feet of the project site therefore, noise generated by project operation is unlikely to result in adverse impacts to receptors in the vicinity.

- C. For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels; or

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located in the vicinity of a private airstrip, within two miles of a public airport, or within the boundary of an Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. The nearest airport to the project site is San Joaquin Airport, located approximately 5.0 miles southeast of the project site.

XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING

Would the project:

- A. Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?; or
- B. Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project is not anticipated to induce substantial population growth in the area, and no new homes or other related businesses are proposed. The project will use existing roads and other infrastructure. No displacement of existing housing or people is anticipated.

XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

Would the project:

- A. Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the following public services:

1. Fire protection;
2. Police protection;
2. Schools;
4. Parks; or
5. Other public facilities?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose and will not require the provision of any new or physically altered government facilities.

XVI. RECREATION

Would the project:

- A. Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated; or
- B. Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No increased use of existing parks in the area of the project is anticipated with this proposal.

XVII. TRANSPORTATION

Would the project:

- A. Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will result in an increase in traffic trips in the vicinity of the project site, however, such increase is not anticipated to result in substantial adverse impacts to County roads, or conflict with any General Plan Transportation policies. According to information provided in the applicant's submitted operational statement and a Vehicle Miles Travelled Memorandum (VMT) prepared for the project by QK, dated January 4, 2022, the majority (approximately 70 percent) of new trips added by the project will consist of truck trips involving the movement of agricultural products, and byproducts.

Both seasonal and nonseasonal employee trips are anticipated to add approximately 11 daily trips, and less than one average daily customer trip during the year.

- B. Be in conflict or be inconsistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to the State of California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA (2018), the California Natural Resources Agency certified the OPR's proposal that Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) be adopted as the most appropriate metric for evaluating a project's transportation impacts. The object of evaluating VMT is to further the goal of reducing per capita VMT statewide. The OPR in its guidance, provides that a project which generates fewer than 110 trips per day, and absent any evidence indicating that a project would generate a potentially significant level of VMT, or would be inconsistent with a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), can be presumed to cause a less than significant transportation impact.

According to the VMT memorandum prepared for the project by QK, dated January 4, 2022, the proposed operation will add approximately 70 average daily trips, including employee and customer vehicle trips during the operating season, between approximately August 1 – December 31. No inconsistencies with the Technical Evaluation of the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Quantification for the Fresno Council Of Government's SB 375 Sustainable Communities Strategy (January 2015) were identified; therefore, the project will not conflict with this plan, and given the number of average daily trips projected, the project will have a less than significant impact on vehicle miles travelled.

- C. Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION
INCORPORATED:

The project does not propose any changes to the existing access to County roads. Access to the almond processing site will be via an existing paved driveway off W. Clayton Avenue. No new points of access are proposed, and any work proposed within the County right-of-way will require an encroachment permit from the County. Additionally, construction activities for the project will be subject to review and approval of a Traffic Management Plan by the Department of Public Works and Planning.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *Prior to issuance of development permits, a Traffic Management Plan, prepared by a licensed Traffic Engineer, shall be submitted to the Design Division of the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning (Design Division), for review and approval. Construction of the proposed new Almond Hulling/Shelling*

facility shall be in substantial conformance with the Traffic Management Plan, as approved by the Design Division.

D. Result in inadequate emergency access?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site takes access via an existing approximately 85-foot-wide asphalt paved driveway off of W. Clayton Avenue; no changes to existing site access are proposed therefore no impacts to emergency access are anticipated.

XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

A. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

1. Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k); or
2. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1? (In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.)

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

No evidence of the existence of Tribal Cultural Resources was identified in the analysis, and none of the Tribes who had previously requested notification of projects in the area, under the provisions of AB 52 expressed interest in consultation on the project; however, the following Mitigation Measure has been included to address the potential for discovery of previously unknown Tribal Cultural Resources during project related ground disturbing activity.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *In the event that cultural resources are unearthed during ground-disturbing activities, all work shall be halted in the area of the find. An Archeologist shall be called to evaluate the findings and make any necessary mitigation recommendations. If human remains are unearthed during ground disturbing activities, no further disturbance is to occur until the Fresno County Sheriff-Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and*

disposition. All normal evidence procedures shall be followed by photos, reports, video, and etc. If such remains are determined to be Native American, the Sheriff-Coroner must notify the Native American Commission within 24 hours.

XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Would the project:

- A. Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose any new construction of stormwater drainage facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, water supply, or other utilities. The project was reviewed by the State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water, which commented that the proposed facility would be served by an existing permitted water system, and that the project does not meet the definition of a new public water system, and would not require a permit.

- B. Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will receive surface water from the Tranquillity Irrigation District which is a permitted public water system. The Irrigation District reviewed the project and did not express any concerns with the project's proposed water use. The project was also reviewed by the Water and Natural Resources Division of the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning, which did not express a water supply concerns with the project.

- C. Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will utilize the two existing on-site septic systems. No concerns related to septic capacity were expressed by any reviewing agencies or departments.

- D. Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals; or

- E. Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project is not anticipated to produce solid waste quantities in excess of State or local standards, or which would exceed the capacity of local infrastructure, or impair attainment of any solid waste reduction goals. The project will be required to comply with all applicable solid waste regulations, and management and reduction statutes.

XX. WILDFIRE

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:

- A. Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects; or
- B. Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire; or
- C. Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment; or
- D. Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project is not located in an area at increased risk from wildfire, nor in a State Responsibility Area. The project will be required to comply with all applicable requirements of the current Fire Code and Building Code.

XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Would the project:

- A. Have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITGATION
INCORPORATED:

The project would not have significant impacts on fish or wildlife, or any plant community. Although no historic, cultural or tribal cultural resources were identified on or in the vicinity of the project site, mitigation has been included to address the possibility of previously unknown historical, cultural or tribal cultural resources being unearthed by project related ground disturbance.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *See Mitigation Measures under Sections V and XVIII.*

- B. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable (“cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

No cumulatively considerable impacts were identified in the analysis. The project proposed a value-added agricultural operation on a site historically used for a similar purpose, in an area characterized by large commercial agricultural operations.

- C. Have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings either directly or indirectly?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITGATION
INCORPORATED:

No environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings. Impacts to air quality, water quality, noise, and hazards and hazardous materials were found to be less than significant or have no impact. However, to address the potential for traffic hazards created by construction traffic to and from the project site, and from the introduction of new outdoor lighting sources, mitigation has been included requiring the project proponent to submit for approval and adhere to a traffic management plan, and that all outdoor lighting at the project site be hooded and direct away from adjacent property and the public road right-of-way.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *See Mitigation Measures under Section I and Section XVII.*

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

Based upon the Initial Study prepared for Classified Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3720 , staff has concluded that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

It has been determined that there would be no impacts to Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, and Wildfire.

Potential impacts related to Air Quality, Agriculture and Forestry Resources, Energy, Biological Resources, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hydrology and Water Quality, and Utilities and Service Systems, have been determined to be less than significant.

Potential impacts relating to Aesthetics, Cultural Resources, Transportation and Tribal Cultural Resources have determined to be less than significant with compliance with the included Mitigation Measures.

A Mitigated Negative Declaration is recommended and is subject to approval by the decision-making body. The Initial Study is available for review upon request, at 2220 Tulare Street, Suite A, street level, located on the southwest corner of Tulare and "M" Street, Fresno, California.

JS

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