

TULARE COUNTY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF DRAFT FOCUSED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT SETTON PISTACHIO TREATED WASTEWATER LAND APPLICATION EXPANSION PROJECT

(State Clearinghouse No. 2023030410)

Project Title: Setton Pistachio Treated Wastewater Land Application Expansion Project

Project Location: The project would involve improvements to the existing Setton Terra Bella Pistachio Facility wastewater treatment facilities, the existing East and West storage ponds, and 89 acres of new Land Application Areas (LAAs) (pistachio orchards with crop cover) on APNs 320-040-004, -005, -006, -007, -008, -009; 320-040-034; and 320-070-023, -024, and -025. The project sites are owned by Setton Pistachio.

The Terra Bella facility is zoned Light and Heavy Manufacturing (M-1 and M-2) and is bordered by properties zoned Rural-Residential (R-A), General-Commercial and Mixed-Use (C-2-MU), and Light-Manufacturing (M-1) to the north; Single-Family Residential (R-1), Two-Family Residential (R-2), and Multiple-Family (R-3) to the east; Heavy-Manufacturing (M-2) and Rural-Residential (R-A) to the south; and Exclusive Agriculture (AE-10) to the west. The pipeline connections and additional LAAs are located in the Exclusive Agriculture - 10 acre minimum (AE-10) zoning district, surrounded by lands also zoned AE-10.

Project Description: To allow the Setton Pistachio Terra Bella Facility to fully utilize its current design capacity to process up to 122 million pounds of pistachios per year, Setton is proposing to add 89 acres of LAAs (total of 961 acres) to expand the treated wastewater disposal capacity. The additional LAAs would allow Setton Pistachio to increase the annual wastewater discharge from 60 million gallons per year (MGY) to 85 MGY (maximum daily discharge rates would remain at 3 million gallons).

The project would include installation of a 15-inch subsurface pipeline to connect the additional LAAs to the existing treated wastewater distribution pipelines as well as the installation of high-efficiency drip irrigation lines within the LAAs.

Two encroachment permits would be required from Tulare County for the new subsurface pipeline, which would need to be installed under two county roads to reach two of the new LAAs.

Improvements to the existing wastewater treatment facilities are proposed to protect beneficial uses of water, prevent nuisance conditions, and comply with waste discharge requirements issued by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. An additional fiber filter unit would be added to the existing gunite-lined pond to remove excess solids from treated wastewater prior to its release into the East and West Ponds, where it is stored on a short-term basis for distribution to the LAAs. The retention time for wastewater in the ponds would be limited to two hours in each pond to prevent the degradation of remaining matter in the water that could cause odors. As an additional preventive measure, paddles would be installed in the West Pond and a venturi system would be installed in the East Pond to improve aeration to prevent septicity and odor production. Both types of aerators would provide dissolved oxygen (DO) to ensure that carbonaceous biochemical oxygen demand (cBOD) in the treated effluent is degraded under aerobic conditions to prevent septicity and odor production.

Finally, as part of the existing odor control plan for the Setton Pistachio Terra Bella Facility, chemical oxidizer and pH control chemicals, such as hydrogen peroxide have been used. It is anticipated that that the project would involve continued use of such chemicals, such as hydrogen peroxide and lime.

The additional LAAs would allow the Terra Bella facility to fully utilize its current design capacity, which would represent an increase of approximately 20.6 million pounds pistachios being processed (over the average for the facility of 101.4 million pounds per year). Processing that increased amount of pistachios would require increased operations. The project does not propose the construction or operation of any new mechanical or storage facilities at the Terra Bella facility. However, the existing operations would potentially extend over a longer period of time, potentially from eight to ten weeks. This would result in a 20 percent increase in hull bio-matter, from 100 million pounds to approximately 120 million pounds of solid waste. The current limit of 12,500 tons of composting would not change as a result of the project. The project would result in a 20 percent increase in truck trips, including both pistachio delivery trips, which would increase from 6,000 truckloads per year to 7,200 truckloads per year for pistachio deliveries, 3,000 to 3,600 truckloads per year for delivery of “finished” products, and 2,308 trips per year to 2,770 trips per year for off-hauling of bio solids to composting and cattle feed locations. However, staffing at the Terra Bella facility would continue to between 500 and 550 permanent employees and an additional 500 to 550 temporary employees during the peak harvest season.

Construction is anticipated to occur in 2024 and would take less than a month.

Potentially Significant Environmental Impacts: The project would result in less than significant impacts to air quality, energy, greenhouse gas emissions, and hydrology and water quality. The project would result in potentially significant environmental impacts to archaeological resources and special status wildlife species and habitat that would be mitigated to less than significant.

EIR Availability: A copy of the Draft Focused EIR will be available for review at the Tulare County Resource Management Agency, 5961 South Mooney Blvd., Visalia, CA 93277, (559) 624-7000, (Monday through Thursday: 9:00 am to 4:30 pm) and (Friday: 9:00 am to 11:00 am).

A copy of the Draft Focused EIR may also be obtained and/or reviewed at the following locations:

Visalia Main Branch Library
200 West Oak Avenue
Visalia, CA 93291

Tuesday through Thursday: 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Friday: 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Saturday: 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Porterville Library
50 W. Olive Ave, Ste B
Porterville, CA 93257

Monday through Thursday: 9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Friday and Saturday: 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Sunday: 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Terra Bella Branch Library
23825 Avenue 92
Terra Bella, CA 93270

Tuesday through Thursday: 12:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Tulare County Web Site: <https://tularecounty.ca.gov/rma/planning-building/environmental-planning/environmental-impact-reports/setton-pistachio-land-application/>

Public Meeting: A public meeting will be held on the Draft EIR on Wednesday April 10, 2024, between 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. at the Tulare County Resource Management Agency, Main Conference Room, 5961 S. Mooney Boulevard, Visalia, CA 93277.

Contact for More Information: Gary Mills, Chief Environmental Planner (559) 624-7199 (para Español llame Brenda Alcantar (559) 624-7132).

Public Review Period: The Draft Focused EIR has a review period of 45+ days, starting on **March 20, 2024**, and ending **May 6, 2024**. Any written comments on the Draft Focused EIR should be sent to the Tulare County Resource Management Agency, to the attention of:

Gary Mills, Chief Environmental Planner
Tulare County Resource Management Agency
5961 South Mooney Blvd., Visalia, CA 93277
gmills@tularecounty.ca.gov

After the close of the public comment review period on the Draft Focused EIR established by this notice, this matter will be set for public hearing before the Tulare County Board of Supervisors at a date to be determined later. Notice of the date, time and place for such public hearing will be published and/or mailed as provided by law.

Please take notice that - pursuant to Public Resource Code § 21177, Government Code § 65009, and other applicable law - if you challenge the proposed action described above in court, then you may be limited to raising only those issues or objections you or someone else raised during the public comment period or the public hearing, or in written correspondence delivered to the Tulare County Resource Management Agency within the review period, or to the Planning Commission during the public hearing.

Reed Schenke, Director, Resource Management Agency