

I. INTRODUCTION

The County of San Luis Obispo (County), serving as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, has prepared this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to assess the impacts that may result from development of the proposed project. The proposed project involves an expansion of the existing Cold Canyon Landfill (Landfill), in San Luis Obispo County, California. The applicant is proposing to expand the Landfill footprint; increase permitted tonnage limits; increase Landfill disposal capacity; expand and relocate the Resource Recovery Park, Compost Operation, and the Materials Recovery Facility; change the hours of operation; add staff; and, construct a new entrance. The modifications have been proposed to allow the facility to more efficiently and effectively divert recoverable waste from the disposal area and increase disposal capacity, extending the life of the Landfill by 25 years, to approximately 2040.

A. PURPOSE OF THE EIR

The purpose of this EIR is to identify the proposed project's significant impacts on the environment, indicate the manner in which such significant impacts will be mitigated or avoided, and identify alternatives to the proposed project that avoid or reduce these impacts. This EIR is intended to serve as an informational document for use by the County of San Luis Obispo, other responsible agencies, and the general public in their consideration and evaluation of the environmental consequences associated with the implementation of the proposed project. This document is provided to the public and decision-makers for their review and comment as required by CEQA.

This EIR has been prepared in accordance with the State and County administrative guidelines established to comply with CEQA, as amended. Section 15151 of the State CEQA *Guidelines* provides the following standards for EIR adequacy:

“An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision-makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.”

Under the CEQA process, an EIR must serve as a full disclosure document that enables the lead and responsible agencies to fully evaluate potential environmental impacts and the consequences of their decision on a proposed project. This EIR has been written to comply with the requirements of CEQA for the analysis of the proposed project, as well as the development and evaluation of alternatives to the proposed project.

B. EIR STRUCTURE

Contents of the EIR are outlined below, and the attached appendices contain background and technical information compiled and developed throughout the environmental review process. Contents of the EIR were determined from the results of an Initial Study (IS) prepared by the lead agency, responses from the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the EIR sent to responsible agencies, and comments received during the public scoping meeting. The IS, the NOP, and comment letters received during the NOP review period are included in Appendix A. Additional comment letters received after the NOP review period are included as well.

1. Scoping Process

In compliance with State CEQA Guidelines, the County of San Luis Obispo has taken steps to maximize opportunities to participate in the environmental process. During the environmental determination process, an effort was made to contact various federal, state, regional, and local governmental agencies and other interested parties to solicit comments and inform the public of the proposed project. This included the distribution of the NOP on October 31, 2006, to various agencies, organizations, and interested persons throughout the County and surrounding area. The proposed project was described, the scope of the environmental review was identified, and agencies and the public were invited to review and comment on the NOP. The close of the NOP review period was November 29, 2006. Agencies, organizations, and interested parties not contacted or who did not respond to the request for comments about the project during the preparation of the Draft EIR currently have the opportunity to comment during the 45-day public review period on the Draft EIR. In addition, a scoping meeting was held on May 7, 2007 at the City/County Library in San Luis Obispo. There were approximately 20 attendees and over 70 comments were received.

2. EIR Contents

The scope of the EIR includes issues identified by the lead agency during the preparation of the NOP for the proposed project, as well as environmental issues raised by agencies and the general public in response to the NOP and at the scoping meeting.

The EIR is divided into the following major sections:

Introduction. Provides the purpose of an EIR, as well as scope, content, and the use of the document.

Summary. Provides a brief summary of the project description, impacts and mitigation measures, alternatives, growth inducing impacts, and the monitoring program.

Project Description. Provides the general background of the project, objectives, a detailed description of the project characteristics, and a listing of necessary permits and government approvals.

Environmental Setting. Describes the physical setting and surrounding land uses.

Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures. Discusses the environmental setting as it relates to the various issue areas, regulatory settings, thresholds of significance, impact assessment and methodology, project-specific impacts and mitigation measures, cumulative impacts, and secondary impacts. The EIR analyzes the potentially significant impacts to the following resource areas, as identified during the preparation of the NOP:

- Aesthetic Resources
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Noise
- Transportation and Circulation
- Water Resources

Alternatives. Summarizes the environmental advantages and disadvantages associated with the project and alternatives. Consistent with the CEQA *Guidelines*, the alternatives analysis discusses impacts on a general, qualitative level rather than a detailed analysis. As required, the “No Project” alternative is included among the alternatives considered. If the No Project alternative is identified as the “Environmentally Superior Alternative,” then the Environmentally Superior Alternative is chosen from the other alternatives.

Environmental Analysis. Identifies growth inducing impacts, including the spatial, economic, and/or population growth impacts that may result from implementation of the proposed project. This section also includes a discussion of long-term/short-term productivity and irreversible environmental changes.

Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan. This section contains a listing of all mitigation measures contained in the EIR, the requirements of the mitigation measures, the applicant’s responsibility and timing for implementation of these measures, the party responsible for verification, the method of verification, and verification timing.

3. EIR Terminology

Landfill operations are varied and often complex, as is the terminology used to describe them. In an effort to make this EIR as clear to the public as possible, a fold-out acronym table has been included in Appendix G. A list of the most commonly used acronyms and definitions is also included in Section II, Summary.

C. AGENCY USE OF THE DOCUMENT

The County, as the CEQA lead agency, is responsible for administering the preparation of the EIR and will be responsible for certifying the Final EIR. Lead agency decision-makers (i.e., the Board of Supervisors) will use the EIR as an informational document to assist in the decision-making process, ultimately resulting in the approval, denial, or assignment of conditions to the project. The following jurisdictions may also use this EIR in reviewing and issuing their respective permits and authorizations (as applicable):

- California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG)
- Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)
- San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District (SLOAPCD)
- California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB)
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

1. California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB)

The Landfill currently operates under a Solid Waste Facility Permit (SWFP) issued by the CIWMB. The proposed project would require modifications to that permit. The CIWMB must concur that the project is in compliance with CEQA before they can issue a revised permit; this EIR would be used to determine compliance.

The CIWMB must also ensure that solid waste facilities meet required state minimum standards for the protection of public, health, safety, and the environment through inspections of the Landfill. The California Code of Regulations, Titles 14 and 27. Title 14 establishes performance standards for solid waste handling activities, including the processing of construction and demolition wastes, tires, and nonhazardous petroleum contaminated soils, among others.

Title 27 establishes standards for landfill siting, fire control methods, landfill gas capture, composting, water quality monitoring, closure and post-closure maintenance of landfills, and handling and cover of waste, among other things. This Title also requires that operators of solid waste landfills demonstrate the availability of financial resources to conduct closure activities and requires them to establish a post-closure maintenance fund with the RWQCB.

Compliance with these regulations is verified through onsite inspection of facilities and coordination with the other federal, state, and local agencies involved with permitting the various landfill activities.

D. PROJECT SPONSORS AND CONTACT PERSONS

Key contact persons are as follows:

Lead Agency: County of San Luis Obispo
 Department of Planning and Building
 Division of Environmental and Resource Management
 County Government Center, Room 200
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93408
 Mr. John McKenzie, Senior Planner

Project Proponent: Cold Canyon Landfill, Inc.
 c/o Waste Connections
 Western Region
 5597 Morningside Drive
 Clayton, CA 94517-1027
 Mr. Tom Reilly, Engineering Manager

E. REVIEW OF THE DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR was distributed to responsible and trustee agencies, other affected agencies, surrounding cities, and interested parties, as well as all parties requesting a copy of the Draft EIR in accordance with Public Resources Code 21092(b)(3). The Notice of Completion of the Draft EIR was also distributed as required by CEQA. The 45-day public review period begins on January 15, 2009. During this period the EIR, including technical appendices, is available for review at the following locations:

County of San Luis Obispo	San Luis Obispo City-County Library
Environmental Coordinator's Office	995 Palm Street
County Government Center Room 200	San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408	

On behalf of the lead agency, comments on the Draft EIR shall be addressed to:

Mr. John McKenzie
County of San Luis Obispo
Department of Planning and Building
Division of Environmental and Resource Management
County Government Center, Room 200
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

The 45-day public review period will end on March 1, 2009. Written responses to all significant environmental issues raised will be prepared and included as part of the Final EIR and the environmental record for consideration by decision-makers for the project.

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