

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

A. PHYSICAL SETTING AND EXISTING USES

The proposed project is located at 2268 Carpenter Canyon Road (Highway 227), approximately 1.25 miles south of Price Canyon Road and approximately six miles south of the City of San Luis Obispo, in the San Luis Obispo planning area. The project site is located in a relatively hilly, semi-rural area. Scattered residences, residential clusters, smaller-scale agricultural operations, and vineyards are common in the area. Prominent geographic features in the vicinity include the Santa Lucia Mountains to the east and the Edna Valley to the east and north. The actively producing Price Canyon Oilfield is located approximately one mile to the west. The Pacific Ocean is approximately four miles west. The project site is bordered on the west by Highway 227 and on the south by Patchett Road.

The existing Landfill consists of an approximately 121 acre parcel designated Public Facilities (PF) by the County of San Luis Obispo Land Use Map. Public Facility lands are intended to meet regional and community needs, such as the landfill. Other common public facilities include schools, wastewater treatment plants, and maintenance yards. The expansion area is composed of three parcels, all located within the Agriculture (AG) land use category (refer to Figure IV-1). Landfills are an allowed use within the AG category.

**TABLE IV-1
Proposed Landfill Expansion Project Site Land Use**

APN	Land Use Category	Land Use	Acreage
044-171-014	PF	Landfill Operation	120.88
044-261-011	AG	Vacant	0.23
044-261-047	AG	Vacant	75.52
044-261-048	AG	Vacant	12.48
Total			209.11

1. Existing Landfill

Non-hazardous waste disposal began in the northwestern portion of the current 121 acre project site in 1965, and in 1979 a Solid Waste Facilities Permit (SWFP) was issued. The Landfill disposal area slowly expanded south and east of the original site under the SWF permit and, over the years, tonnage of permitted waste accepted increased. The Landfill expanded to accommodate new types of waste accepted and began to reuse/recycle materials where possible. The current operation includes 88 acres of disposal area, a Resource Recovery Park (RRP), Materials Recovery Facility (MRF), and a Compost Operation (CO). There are three runoff retention basins onsite and, in the southwest corner of the site, there are above ground tanks that store leachate.

2. Expansion Area

The three parcels for the proposed expansion area total approximately 88 acres. They are in the Agriculture (AG) land use category. The AG land use category designates land that has existing or potential agricultural production capabilities. According to the San Luis Obispo County Land Use Ordinance Title 22.06.030, waste disposal sites are an allowable use in the Agriculture land use category with Conditional Use Permit approval. Please refer to the Agricultural Resources section, Section V.B., for a detailed discussion of agricultural uses in the area and compatibility. This agricultural land is not under Williamson Act contract.

B. SURROUNDING LAND USES

All parcels directly adjacent to the project site are also designated AG. Portions of five of the adjoining parcels are also designated Rural Lands (RL) (refer to Table V-29 and Figure IV-1). Many of the surrounding properties have residences and include grazing or smaller scale agricultural operations.

TABLE IV-2
Adjacent Properties Land Use

APN	Land Use Designation	Land Use
044-171-011	AG	Residence & Dog Training
044-171-007	AG	Residence
044-171-008	AG	Residence
044-171-009	AG	Residence
044-261-035	AG	Vineyards, Winery
044-261-039	AG	Residence
044-261-041	AG	Residence
044-301-016	AG, RL	Residence and Equestrian Training Center
044-211-008	AG, RL	Residence
044-211-009	AG, RL	Residence
044-211-003	AG, RL	Residence
044-211-014	AG	Residence

Insert Figure IV-1 – LUC Map

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C. CONSISTENCY WITH PLANS AND POLICIES

1. Overview

CEQA Guidelines, §15125(d) states that “the EIR shall discuss any inconsistencies between the proposed project and applicable general plans and regional plans.” While CEQA requires a discussion of consistency with public plans, inconsistency does not necessarily lead to a significant impact. Inconsistency with public plans creates significant impacts under CEQA only when an adverse physical effect would result from the inconsistency.

2. Relevant Land Use Plans

The following is a summary of relevant land use planning documents that include policies that affect the project area. Table IV-1 lists applicable policies from these documents and provides a consistency determination. All adverse physical effects resulting from any inconsistency are discussed in the appropriate environmental analysis sections contained in Section V of this EIR. For example, Policy 3.3.3 of the Noise Element of the County General Plan requires noise generated by transportation sources that exceeds thresholds is mitigated. Consistency with this policy is addressed in the Noise section of this EIR, Section V.I., through analysis of potential noise levels, comparison with established thresholds, and recommendation of mitigation, as applicable. Although the EIR analysis addresses the proposed project’s consistency with applicable land use plans and policies, it is the responsibility of the Board of Supervisors to make the final decision regarding consistency issues.

a. San Luis Obispo County Land Use Ordinance (Title 22)

The County Land Use Ordinance, known as Title 22 for inland portions of the County, includes regulations established and adopted to protect and promote public health, safety, and welfare. Regulations are also adopted to implement the County General Plan, guide and manage the future growth of the county in accordance with those plans, and regulate land use in a manner that will encourage and support the orderly development and beneficial use of lands within the county. In addition, ordinance regulations are in place to minimize adverse effects on the public resulting from land use and development, as well as to protect and enhance the significant natural, historic, archeological and scenic resources within the county as identified by the county general plan. The Land Use Ordinance also includes planning area standards.

b. San Luis Obispo County General Plan

California state law requires each city and county to adopt a general plan “for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries which bears relation to its planning” (§65300). The California Supreme Court has called the general plan the “constitution for future development.” The general plan expresses the community’s development goals and embodies public policy relative to the distribution of future land uses, both public and private. California statute requires seven elements be included in the general plan. These are land use, circulation, housing, open space, safety, conservation, and noise. The San Luis Obispo County General Plan also includes an agriculture element and an energy element. These elements provide the blueprint for future growth in the county. During the environmental review process, two elements of the County’s General Plan proved to be most relevant.

1) San Luis Obispo County General Plan Agriculture and Open Space Element

The Agriculture and Open Space Element outlines policies for the development and management of agricultural and open space lands within the County's jurisdiction, and is focused on "wisely managing and protecting these important land resources in San Luis Obispo County." Recognizing the value of agriculture to the economy and character of the County as a whole, the goals of the plan are to support agricultural production, conserve and protect agricultural lands and resources, and encourage public education and participation in their management. Open Space contributes in large part to the quality of life enjoyed in San Luis Obispo County. The County's goals are to identify, protect, and manage the existing open space by preventing urban sprawl, and encourage public education and participation in the decision making process. The protection of open space is considered essential to the preservation of the rural nature and lifestyles that characterize San Luis Obispo County.

2) San Luis Obispo County Noise Element

The County Noise Element provides a policy framework for addressing potential noise impacts in the planning process, and minimizing future noise conflicts. The Noise Element identifies transportation-related, stationary, and potential operational noise generators in the county, provides a list of noise-sensitive land uses, and identifies acceptable and unacceptable thresholds of noise exposure based on land use. The document also provides mitigation measures that should be applied to projects when noise attenuation is required to meet identified thresholds.

c. San Luis Obispo Area Plan

The San Luis Obispo Area Plan is a component of the General Plan Land Use and Circulation Elements. The purpose of the plan is to refine the goals in those elements to address future development in the planning area. The San Luis Obispo Planning Area encompasses the unincorporated area around the city of San Luis Obispo and surrounding agricultural and rural lands. It is one of thirteen planning areas that make up the county Land Use Element. It extends to the Los Padres National Forest on the north and east, Cuesta College and Camp San Luis Obispo to the west, and the Irish Hills and Arroyo Grande fringe to the south. Planning Area standards are adopted in the County's Land Use Ordinance (Title 22).

d. San Luis Obispo Air Pollution Control District Clean Air Plan

The 2001 Clean Air Plan (CAP) for San Luis Obispo County addresses the attainment and maintenance of state and federal ambient air quality standards. These standards are adopted to protect public health, vegetation, materials and visibility. State standards for ozone and fine particulate matter (PM₁₀) are currently exceeded within the District, and violation of federal standards may occur in future years without adequate planning and air quality management. The CAP provides a description of the local air basin and existing air quality, provides a baseline emissions inventory, and describes programs that address existing and potential future air quality. The San Luis Obispo Air Pollution Control District will often base their analysis of potential air quality impacts on whether or not a project is consistent with the level and type of development anticipated in the CAP, and whether or not the project incorporates emission control strategies outlined in the CAP.

**TABLE IV-3
Consistency with Plans and Policies**

Goals, Policies, Plans, Programs and Standards	Proposed Action	Preliminary Determination
Title 22: Land Use Ordinance (San Luis Obispo Planning Area Standards)		
22.108.020(D). Production agricultural areas. New development shall be designed to minimize the loss of existing and potential production agricultural areas by the placement of buildings and new parcels outside the most agriculturally capable areas.	As discussed in the Agricultural Resources section, the project would result in the permanent loss of approximately 40 acres of potentially productive agricultural soils.	Potentially Inconsistent
22.108.030 (3d). <i>Ridgetop Development</i> - Structures within the corridor boundaries shall not be located so they are silhouetted against the sky as viewed from the scenic highway.	The disposal area would include drainage features, access roads and cut and fill slopes. In addition activity on the disposal area, including construction equipment and haul trucks would be continuously visible on the disposal area throughout the life of the landfill. While these are not specifically "structures," their existence would significantly impact views of the sky from Highway 227.	Potentially Inconsistent
22.108.030(2g). <i>Building Features</i> - Maximum building height is 25 feet above natural grade. Building architecture shall include pitch roofs with a minimum pitch of 3:12. Building colors shall be similar to surrounding natural colors that are no brighter than six in chroma and value on the Munsell Color scale on file in the Department of Planning and Building.	Building heights would not exceed 25 feet from average natural grade.	Consistent
22.108.030 (2h). <i>Landscaping</i> - A landscaping plan per the Land Use Ordinance is required that will insure at least 50% screening of the structure at plant maturity.	Mitigation measures in the Aesthetic Resources section would require all structures visible from Highway 227 to be screened more than 50% at plant maturity.	Consistent
General Plan Agriculture and Open Space Element		
AGP11: Agricultural Water Supplies. a. Maintain water resources for production agriculture, both in	The proposed project would require approximately nine afy of additional water at full capacity. This is not expected to	Potentially Inconsistent

Goals, Policies, Plans, Programs and Standards	Proposed Action	Preliminary Determination
<p>quality and quantity, so as to prevent the loss of agriculture due to competition for water with urban and suburban development.</p>	<p>significantly affect existing agricultural operations, however it would reduce the groundwater available for future intensification of area agricultural operations</p>	
<p>AGP17: Agricultural Buffers. a. Protect land designated Agriculture and other lands in production agriculture by using natural or man-made buffers where adjacent to non-agricultural land uses in accordance with the agricultural buffer policies adopted by the Board of Supervisors.</p>	<p>The County Agriculture Department recommends buffers between proposed development and productive agricultural lands. Implementation of the proposed project would increase non agricultural activities in proximity to agricultural operations to the east (vineyard) and west (equestrian center). Impacts associated with agricultural incompatibility are discussed in the Agricultural Resources section.</p>	<p>Potentially Inconsistent</p>
<p>AGP18: Location of Improvements. a. Locate new buildings, access roads, and structures so as to protect agricultural land.</p>	<p>Implementation of the proposed project would result in the permanent loss of approximately 75 acres of potentially productive farmland This is considered a significant unavoidable cumulative impact.</p>	<p>Potentially Inconsistent</p>
<p>AGP24: Conversion of Agricultural Land. a. Discourage the conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses through the following actions: 1. Work in cooperation with the incorporated cities, service districts, school districts, the County Department of Agriculture, the Agricultural Liaison Board, Farm Bureau, and affected community advisory groups to establish urban service and urban reserve lines and village reserve lines that will protect agricultural land and will stabilize agriculture at the urban fringe. 2. Establish clear criteria in this plan and the Land Use Element for changing the designation of land from Agriculture to non-agricultural designations. 3. Avoid land redesignation (rezoning) that would create new rural residential development outside the urban and village reserve lines. 4. Avoid locating new public facilities outside urban and village reserve lines unless they serve a rural function or there is no feasible alternative location within the urban and village reserve lines.</p>	<p>See above. A discussion of alternative projects which could avoid the conversion is discussed in the Alternatives Analysis, Section VI.</p>	<p>Potentially Inconsistent</p>

Goals, Policies, Plans, Programs and Standards	Proposed Action	Preliminary Determination
<p>AGP33: Archaeological and Cultural Sites.</p> <p>a. When reviewing discretionary development, protect sensitive archaeological and cultural sites by avoiding disturbance where feasible.</p> <p>b. If sensitive sites cannot be avoided, mitigate the impact of development to the maximum extent feasible.</p>	<p>Potentially significant archaeological and historical sites are identified on the project site (refer to Sections V.B. and V.H.). Mitigation measures are recommended to avoid impacts to archaeological resources. Impacts to historic resources would be mitigated to a level of insignificance.</p>	<p>Consistent</p>
<p>San Luis Obispo County Design Guidelines</p>		
<p>RC-7a. Where possible, large cuts and graded pads should be avoided to minimize the alteration of natural contours.</p>	<p>The proposed project would include large cut slopes and graded pads throughout the project site.</p>	<p>Potentially Inconsistent</p>
<p>RC-7e. Artificial slopes that are visible to the public should match the natural contours in the immediate vicinity.</p>	<p>Based on the Aesthetic Resource analysis, the proposed contours would appear unnatural, even after mitigation.</p>	<p>Potentially Inconsistent</p>
<p>General Plan Noise Element</p>		
<p>Policy 3.3.3. Noise created by new transportation noise sources, including roadway improvement projects, shall be mitigated so as not to exceed the levels specified in Table 3-1 within the outdoor activity areas and interior spaces of existing noise sensitive land uses.</p>	<p>As discussed in Section V.I. (Noise), development of the proposed project would create significant amounts of new vehicle traffic on the access road which would result in an exceedance of the 60 dBA outdoor noise threshold as defined by the Noise Element. Mitigation measures, including the construction of a noise berm, have been recommended to reduce this impact to a less than significant level.</p>	<p>Consistent</p>
<p>Policy 3.3.5 Noise created by new proposed stationary noise sources or existing stationary noise sources which undergo modifications that may increase noise levels shall be mitigated as follows and shall be the responsibility of the developer of the stationary noise source:</p> <p>b) Noise levels shall be reduced to or below the noise level standards in Table 3-2 where the stationary noise source will expose an existing noise-sensitive land use to noise levels which exceed the standards in Table 3-2.</p>	<p>The proposed project could potentially expose existing adjacent residential uses to stationary noise levels exceeding the daytime hourly daytime Leq threshold of 50 dBA, resulting in a direct long-term noise impact. Mitigation is recommended, however cumulative impacts would be significant and unavoidable.</p>	<p>Potentially Inconsistent</p>

Goals, Policies, Plans, Programs and Standards	Proposed Action	Preliminary Determination
SLOAPCD Clean Air Plan (CAP)		
<p>Stationary Source Control Program R-9 Municipal Landfill Gas Control. Methane, carbon dioxide, water, VOCs, and a variety of toxic and odorous compounds are formed in landfills as a result of the decomposition of waste materials. These gases escape to the atmosphere through the porous earthen covers of landfills. Rule 426, <u>Landfill Gas Emissions</u>, was adopted to implement 1991 CAP control measure R-9. Rule 426 is targeted at controlling VOC emissions, but the associated methane control is desirable since methane is considered a major contributor to the global warming effect. This rule is applicable to existing solid waste disposal sites with more than 500,000 tons of waste-in-place and all new sites constructed after July 26, 1995. Affected landfills are required to quantify emissions of VOCs by performing testing or emissions modeling. If VOC emissions are found to be greater than 15 tons per year, installation and operation of a landfill gas collection system is required within 18 months of that determination. Collected gas would be cleaned and sold, incinerated, or used to generate electricity.</p>	<p>The Landfill has an existing landfill gas control and capture system. This system is described in the Project Description. The program would be expanded as necessary concurrent with expanded operations at the landfill.</p>	<p>Consistent</p>

D. CUMULATIVE ANALYSIS

1. CEQA Requirements

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), in §15355 of the CEQA Guidelines, defines “cumulative impacts” as two or more individual effects that, when considered together, are considerable or would compound or increase other environmental impacts. Cumulative impacts are the changes in the environment that result from the incremental impact of development of the proposed project when added to other closely related past, present, or reasonably foreseeable, probable future projects. For example, the traffic impacts of two projects in close proximity may be insignificant when analyzed separately, but could have a significant impact when the projects are analyzed together.

According to §15130 of the CEQA Guidelines, cumulative impacts shall be discussed when the project’s incremental effect is cumulatively considerable. The discussion of cumulative impacts needs to reflect the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence, but the discussion does not need to provide as great a detail as is provided for the effects attributable to the project alone. According to the Guidelines, the following elements are necessary for an adequate discussion of significant cumulative impacts:

- A list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency, or
- A summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document, or in a prior environmental document that has been adopted or certified, which described or evaluated regional or areawide conditions contributing to the cumulative impact. Any such planning document shall be referenced and made available to the public at a location specified by the Lead Agency.
- The discussion shall also include a summary of the expected environmental effects to be produced by those projects with specific reference to additional information stating where that information is available, and a reasonable analysis of the cumulative impacts of the relevant projects. The EIR shall examine reasonable options for mitigating or avoiding any significant cumulative effects of a proposed project.

2. Cumulative Development Scenario

An analysis of cumulative effects has been included within each resource issue area discussed in this EIR (refer to Section V, Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures). The proposed project occurs in a relatively rural area. A review of probable future developments in the region surrounding the Landfill performed by the County of San Luis Obispo Planning and Building Department didn’t reveal any specific projects of significant size (i.e. subdivisions, general plan amendments, commercial or industrial developments).

The projects in Table IV-1 have been identified as the cumulative development scenario because they are either in proximity to the proposed project, and/or have similar characteristics, and are therefore likely to contribute cumulatively to environmental impacts.

**TABLE IV-4
Cumulative Development Scenario**

Project	Location	Description	Status	Related Impacts
Patchett Pit	0.5 mile south	Active surface mine	Operating	Truck traffic, aesthetics, air quality
Price Canyon Oilfield	one mile west	Active oilfield	Operating and recent approval for expansion	Truck traffic, air quality, aesthetics, greenhouse gas
Santa Maria Regional Landfill	20 miles south	Active landfill	Operating	Truck traffic, Greenhouse gas, nuisance
Chicago Grade Landfill	25 miles north	Active landfill	Operating, and recent approval for expansion	Greenhouse gas, nuisance

Because these projects have already been approved and are operating, their contributions to impacts are part of the “Existing Setting” described in Section V, Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures. For example, the Transportation and Circulation section includes recently completed traffic counts on local roads. These counts would reflect activity associated with these projects, if they contribute. In addition, because the list of projects is relatively short, for some issue areas it was necessary to develop an alternative reasonable worst case cumulative development scenario. This is true of Water Resources, for example. There are no known *specific* probable future projects that would, along with the proposed project, impact groundwater resources. However, given the relatively recent conversion of grazing lands to vineyards and the demand for semi-rural residential development, a water-resource specific cumulative development scenario was created. This scenario included residential development of rural parcels, and agricultural intensification of parcels in the Agricultural land use category.