



RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: State Clearinghouse
PO Box 3044/1400 Tenth St
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: County of Tulare – RMA
5961 S Mooney Blvd
Visalia, CA 93277

Date: March 15, 2023

Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Scoping Meeting

Project Title: Setton Pistachio Treated Wastewater Land Application Expansion Project

Project Applicant: Setton Pistachio

Project Location: The Setton Terra Bella Pistachio Facility is located at 9370 Road 234, Terra Bella, east of State Route (SR) 65, in unincorporated Tulare County. An additional 89 acres of land application areas (LAAs) are proposed on APNs 320-040-004, -005, -006, -007, -008, -009; 320-040-034; and 320-070-023, -024, and -025 (89 acres of pistachio orchards with crop cover).

Tulare County Resource Management Agency (RMA) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an EIR (EIR) for the Setton Pistachio Treated Wastewater Land Application Expansion Project. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit(s) or other approval(s) for the project. In addition, please provide us with contact information of the person(s) in your agency that we may contact during the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. The Notice of Preparation (NOP) is also available on the County website beginning on March 15, 2023 at: <https://tularecounty.ca.gov/rma/planning-building/environmental-planning/environmental-impact-reports/setton-pistachio-land-application/>

Due to the limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but no later than 30 days after receipt of this notice, by 5:00 p.m. on **April 14, 2023**.

A scoping meeting will be held on Thursday **March 30, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.** at the Tulare County Resource Management Agency, Main Conference Room, 5961 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia, CA 93277.

Please direct your response to Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner at the address shown above. He may be contacted by e-mail at hguerra@tularecounty.ca.gov or by telephone at 559-624-7121.

Signature: 

Date: 3/15/2023

Title: Chief Environmental Planner

Signature: 

Date: 3/15/2023

Title: RMA Director / Environmental Assessment Officer

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375

PROJECT LOCATION

The Setton Terra Bella Pistachio Facility is an existing pistachio and citrus processing facility (the citrus processing facility is owned by Porterville Citrus Inc.) located at 9370 Road 234, in the town of Terra Bella, east of State Route (SR) 65, in unincorporated Tulare County (Figure 1). The Setton facility includes wastewater treatment facilities, which are located east and west of SR 65 and south of SR 190. The project site includes the existing wastewater treatment facilities, storage ponds, and land application areas (LAAs) (Figure 2). LAAs are agricultural lands that are authorized by the Central Valley Region of the Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) to receive treated wastewater from the Setton wastewater treatment facilities for irrigation purposes.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Setton Pistachio (the applicant) is proposing to increase the volume of treated wastewater that would be applied to the LAAs during the pistachio harvest season. To account for the increased volume of treated wastewater to be used for irrigation, Setton is proposing to add 89 acres of LAAs to expand their wastewater treatment disposal capacity. As illustrated in Figure 2, the additional 89 acres would include APNs 320-040-004, -005, -006, -007, -008, -009; 320-040-034; and 320-070-023, -024, and -025 (89 acres of pistachio orchards with crop cover). The sites are owned by Setton Pistachio and are zoned AE-20 (Exclusive Agricultural Zone - 20 Acre Minimum) by Tulare County. The proposed LAAs are surrounded by land developed with agriculture and local roads.

The project would include installation of a 15-inch subsurface pipeline to connect the additional LAAs to the existing treated wastewater distribution pipelines and installation of irrigation lines within the LAAs. Two encroachment permits would be required from Tulare County for the new pipeline to reach two of the new LAAs. 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), allowing the facility to fully utilize its current design capacity. Improvements to the existing wastewater treatment facilities are also 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. This would include adding fiber filters 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. Further, paddles would be installed in the West Pond for aeration, and a Venturi Model 06 EMOHTM system would be installed in the East Pond to improve aeration to prevent septicity and odor production.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The EIR will describe the potential for significant direct and indirect environmental impacts of construction and operation of the project. As necessary, feasible and practicable mitigation measures will be recommended to reduce identified significant or potentially significant impacts. The EIR will include evaluation of potential cumulative impacts due to the project, defined as impacts that could be exacerbated when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, as well as alternatives to the proposed project that could reduce or avoid project-related significant impacts. Tulare County anticipates that the project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts in the following resource areas, which will be evaluated in the EIR:

- **Air Quality:** The EIR will evaluate the potential impacts due to temporary increases in air pollutant emissions associated with construction and potential long-term increases in pollutant emissions, including odors, associated with project operations.
- **Biological Resources:** Based on record searches and a survey of the project site, the EIR will include a description of special-status plant and wildlife species known to occur, or with potential

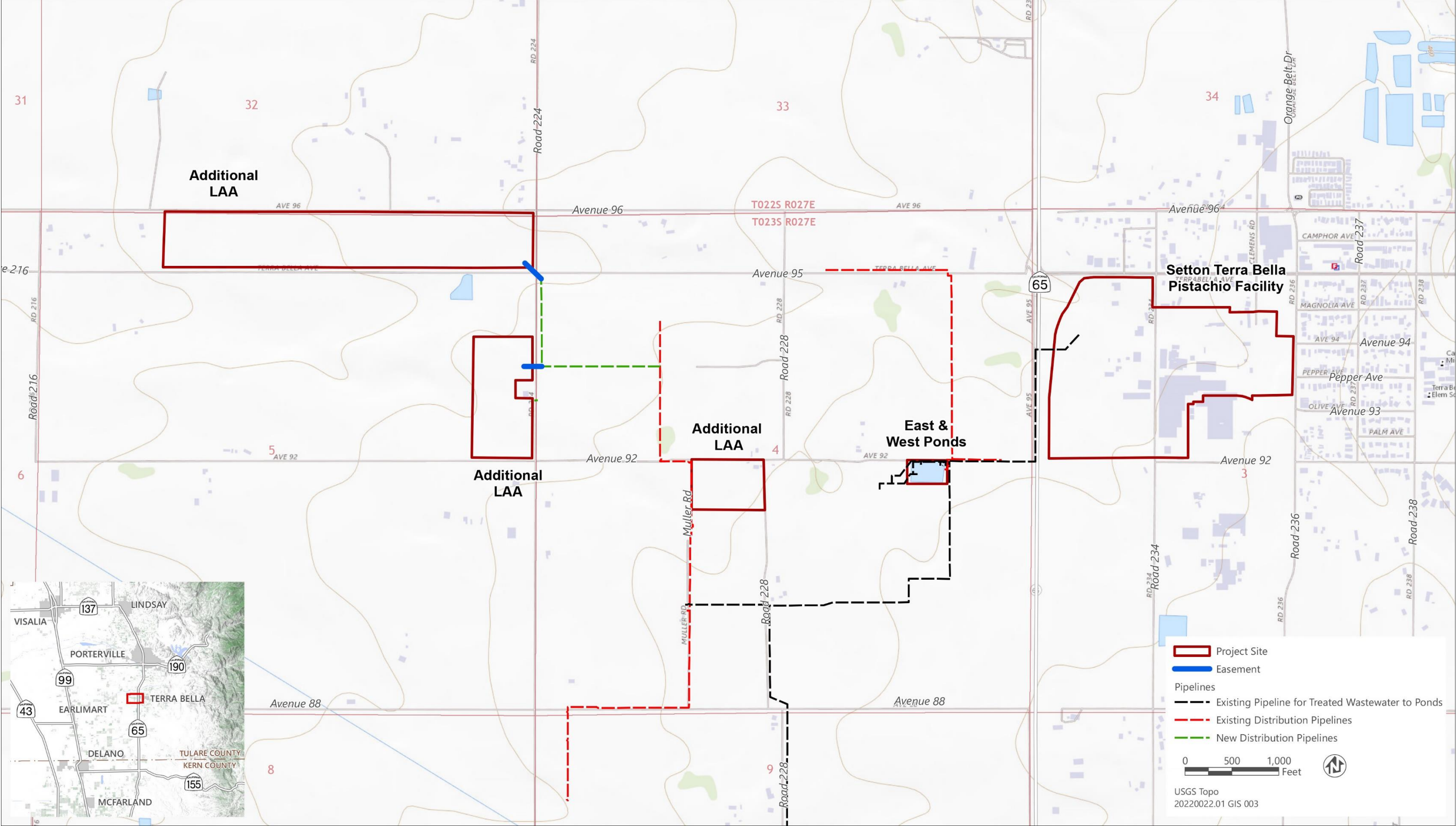
to occur, within the project site, and a determination of whether suitable habitat exists on-site to support special-status habitats or species.

- **Cultural Resources/Tribal Cultural Resources:** A record search will be provided via the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center. Tribal or other cultural resources that are known or have the potential to occur on the project site will be assessed, and the potential impacts that may occur to known and unanticipated resources because of project implementation will be evaluated. The EIR will document the results of AB 52 and SB 18 consultation and any agreements on mitigation measures for tribal cultural resources.
- **Energy:** The EIR will discuss the potential impacts of the project's energy usage due to the increase in wastewater discharge to the additional LAAs, focused on whether there is a potential for inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary energy consumption.
- **Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change:** The EIR will evaluate temporary increases in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with mobile-source exhaust from construction worker commute trips, truck haul trips, and equipment; and long-term increases in GHG emissions associated with increased truckloads of pistachios due to fully utilizing the current wastewater treatment facility design capacity and potential increased energy demand for the increase in wastewater discharge to the additional LAAs.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** The EIR will evaluate the potential for existing or possible hazardous materials within the project site and the potential for on-site hazardous materials usage. No schools are located proximate to the project site.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality:** The EIR will evaluate potential water quality impacts, particularly to groundwater quality due to the increased use of treated wastewater for agricultural irrigation purposes. It is anticipated that temporary construction disturbances would result in less than significant impacts related to drainage, erosion, and flooding impacts.
- **Transportation:** The EIR will evaluate if there are temporary construction-related transportation impacts or adjustments to long-term operation-related vehicular trips.
- **Utilities and Service Systems:** The EIR will evaluate potential impacts related to water, wastewater, and solid waste associated with the project.

Figure 1 Regional Location



Figure 2 Project Location



ISSUES ANTICIPATED TO BE SCOPED OUT

The County anticipates that the project would have less-than-significant impacts or no impacts on the following environmental resources. Therefore, these issues are anticipated to be scoped-out of detailed review in the EIR for the following reasons.

- **Aesthetics:** The installation of underground pipelines, irrigation lines, and improvements within the existing wastewater treatment facilities would not alter the visual character, light, or glare at the project site.
- **Agriculture and Forestry Resources:** The addition of the LAAs would not alter the existing pistachio orchards; rather, the project would allow the wastewater treatment facility to more fully utilize its design capacity, which would support the agricultural processing and production of pistachios. Additionally, the project site does not include forested land or forestry resources.
- **Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources:** The installation of underground pipelines, irrigation lines, and improvements within the existing wastewater treatment facilities would be constructed according to current building codes and are not anticipated to result in increased risks due to geologic hazards.
- **Land Use and Planning:** The proposed LAAs and existing wastewater treatment facilities are owned by Setton Pistachio, the LAAs are planted in pistachios, and their use as LAAs would create a community barrier nor create inconsistencies with policies established for the purpose of reducing environmental impacts.
- **Noise and Vibration:** The temporary increase in noise (including off-site, vehicle traffic noise) during construction would be consistent with county construction noise limits and would not be expected to result in a substantial increase in ambient noise. The operation of the project would not alter the existing wastewater treatment facilities in a way that would increase noise.
- **Population and Housing:** Development of the project would not induce population growth, nor would it displace people or housing. Therefore, no impacts on population and housing are anticipated.
- **Public Services and Recreation:** The project would not alter staff at Setton Pistachio and would not induce population growth; as a result, there would be no increased demand for, nor need for construction or expansion of fire protection facilities, law enforcement facilities, school facilities, or park amenities.
- **Wildfire:** There are no lands within the Town of Terra Bella that are classified as state responsibility areas or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the project would not exacerbate wildfire hazards.

COMMENT PERIOD

Tulare County requests written comments regarding the scope and content for the EIR that are relevant to your agency's statutory/regulatory responsibilities or is of interest to individuals, to ascertain potential environmental impacts of the project. The NOP comment period extends from March 15 to April 14, 2023.

The NOP is available for review at the following locations:

- Project Webpage: <https://tularecounty.ca.gov/rma/planning-building/environmental-planning/environmental-impact-reports/setton-pistachio-land-application/>
- Tulare County Resource Management Agency Permits Services Counter, 5961 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia, CA 93277
- Porterville Public Library, 50 W Olive Ave Suite B, Porterville, CA 93257

*Notice of Preparation and Scoping Meeting
Setton Pistachio Treated Wastewater Land Application Expansion Project
March 15, 2023*

Written and/or email comments on the NOP should be provided at the earliest possible date, but must be received by 5:00 p.m. on **April 14, 2023**. Please send all comments on the NOP to:

Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner
Tulare County Resource Management Agency
Economic Development and Planning Branch
5961 S Mooney Blvd., Visalia, CA 93277
Email: hguerra@tularecounty.ca.gov
Phone: (559) 624-7121

Comments provided via email should include “Setton Pistachio Wastewater LAA Expansion NOP Scoping Comment” in the subject line and the name and physical address of the commenter in the body of the email.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

Tulare County will host a public scoping meeting to inform interested parties about the project, and to provide agencies and the public with an opportunity to provide comments on the scope and content of the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held on Thursday **March 30, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.** at the Tulare County Resource Management Agency, Main Conference Room, 5961 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia, CA 93277.